Winter 2008

America's Most Influential Education Journal

IN THE NEWS

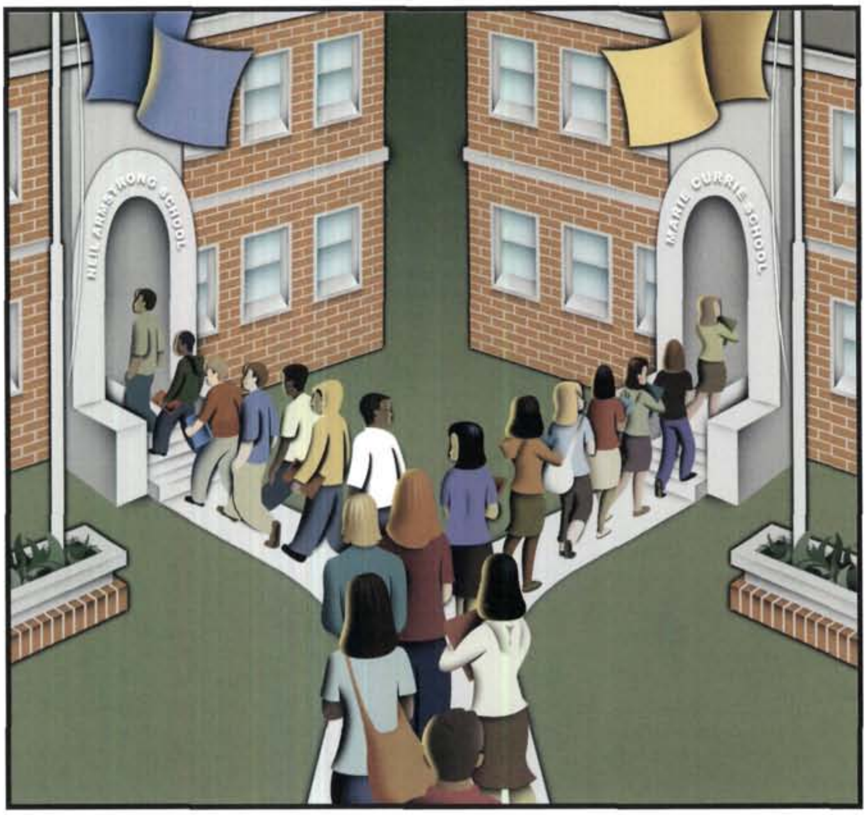
EDUCATION next

A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH

Learning Separately

The case for single-sex schools

PETER MEYER



IN THIS ISSUE:

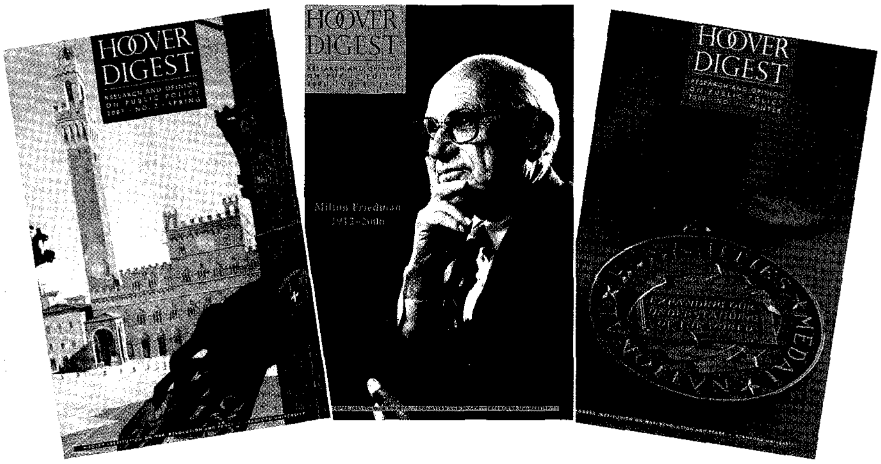
Inside Teacher Pensions, Election 2008, Missouri Tax Credits Debacle, What's Ahead for Charters, Teacher Values, Accountability Triage

CONTRIBUTORS: ROBERT COSTRELL, MICHAEL PODGURSKY, ANDY SMARICK, CHRISTOPHER LEHANE, DAVID WINSTON, ROBERT SLATER, WILBUR RICH, WILLIAM HOWELL, CHRISTOPHER BERRY, MATTHEW SPRINGER

www.educationnext.org / $7.00

Hoover Digest
RESEARCH AND OPINION ON PUBLIC POLICY

FREE ISSUE



An invitation to think—and act!

Read about it in the *Hoover Digest.*

The *Hoover Digest* challenges the informed reader with lively writing about war and peace, poverty and wealth, history and the future. Catch up on national and world affairs with the magazine that showcases the ideas of the Hoover Institution, one of the world's most renowned public policy research centers.

Ask for your complimentary copy of the latest issue. There is no obligation to continue. Or subscribe, and receive four quarterly issues at the special introductory rate of $20.

Order now! Call 800.935.2882 or visit www.hooverdigest.org

HOOVER INSTITUTION

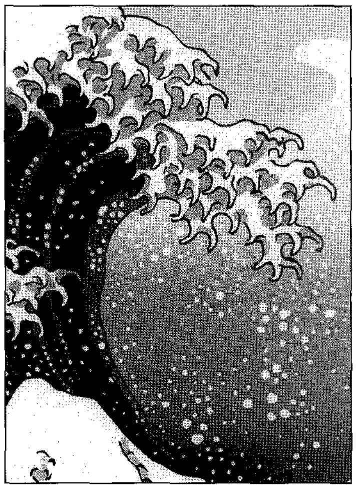
. . . ideas defining a free society

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Stanford, California 94305-6010 Toll-free: 877.466.8374 Fax: 650.723.1687 info@hoover.stanford.edu www.hoover.org

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1

EDUCATION next

A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH



38

46

66

features

10 Learning Separately

The case for single-sex schools by PETER MEYER

22 Peaks, Cliffs, and Valleys

The peculiar incentives of teacher pensions by ROBERT M. COSTRELL and MICHAEL PODGURSKY

30 St. Louis Blues

Tax credits down and out in Missouri by WILBUR C. RICH

38 Wave of the Future

Why charter schools should replace failing urban schools by ANDY SMARICK

46 American Teachers

What values do they hold? by ROBERT O. SLATER

forum

54 Election 2008: The Education Debate

The Democratic Take by CHRISTOPHER S. LEHANE

The Right Republican Strategy by DAVID WINSTON

research

66 Accountability Lost
Student learning seldom a factor in school board elections
by CHRISTOPHER R. BERRY and WILLIAM G. HOWELL

74 Accountability Incentives
Do schools practice educational triage?
by MATTHEW G. SPRINGER

74

from the editors

5 Excellence Reformers Need to Make a Choice
by PAUL E. PETERSON

correspondence

6 Education Next *poll;*
Moving to Opportunity;
Murray's challenge; measuring NCLB

the legal beat

9 Doubtful Jurisprudence
by JOSHUA DUNN and MARTHA DERTHICK

book review

80 Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade by LINDA PERLSTEIN
"It's Being Done": Academic Success in Unexpected Schools by KARIN CHENOWETH
REVIEWED by NATHAN GLAZER

A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future by DANIEL H. PINK
REVIEWED by MARK BAUERLEIN

84 Book Alert

*cultur*ed

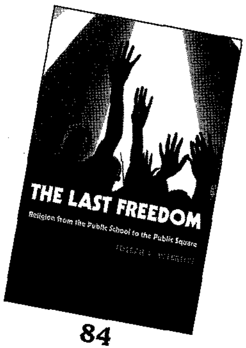
85 Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader?
REVIEWED by DAVID STEINER

what next

86 Let's Talk About It
by MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

school life

88 Campaign 101
by EMBER REICHGOTT JUNGE



84

COVER ILLUSTRATION / *Jeff Koegel*

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1
EDUCATION
next
A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH

Editor-in-Chief	Paul E. Peterson
Senior Editor	Chester E. Finn Jr.
Executive Editors	Frederick M. Hess Marci Kanstoroom Michael J. Petrilli Martin West
Managing Editor	Carol Peterson
Manuscript Editor	Kathryn Ciffolillo
Design Director	Bruce Sanders
Graphics Editor	Mark Linnen
Research Manuscript Editor	Tammy Frisby
Contributing Editors	Jay P. Greene, Peter Meyer
Editorial Staff	Ronald Berry, Sarah Bruce, Susan Pasternack
Design Production	Robin Cheung
Web Editor	Mark Linnen
Circulation	Keite Davis
Editorial Board	John E. Chubb, Eric A. Hanushek, Paul Hill, E. D. Hirsch Jr., Caroline M. Hoxby, Terry M. Moe, Diane Ravitch, Herbert Walberg

Publisher	Hoover Institution, Leland Stanford Junior University

Additional Sponsoring Institutions	Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

Subscriptions One-year subscription (four issues), $20 in the United States; $30 in Canada; $40 elsewhere. To subscribe or to submit change of address information, call us at (800) 935-2882; fax us at (650) 723-8626; visit us at www.educationnext.org; or email us at educationnext@hoover.stanford.edu. You may also write to *Education Next* Subscriptions, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6010. Cover price is $7/issue. ISSN 1539-9672.

Advertising For information on advertising, please contact Advertising Manager, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 495-6954, en_ads@ksg.harvard.edu.

Letters We welcome letters about our contents. Longer versions of some letters may be found at www.educationnext.org. Write to Letters to the Editor, *Education Next*, 309 CGIS South, 1730 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02138; fax to (617) 496-1507; or email Editor_EN@gov.harvard.edu.

Editorial Queries We consider unsolicited contributions. Send manuscript submissions as email attachments to Editor_EN@latte.harvard.edu. Pieces sent by regular mail go to Carol Peterson, *Education Next*, 309 CGIS South, 1730 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Opinions expressed in *Education Next* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board of *Education Next*, the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University, or the sponsors of *Education Next*.

Visit us at http://www.educationnext.org, where unabridged essays can be found.

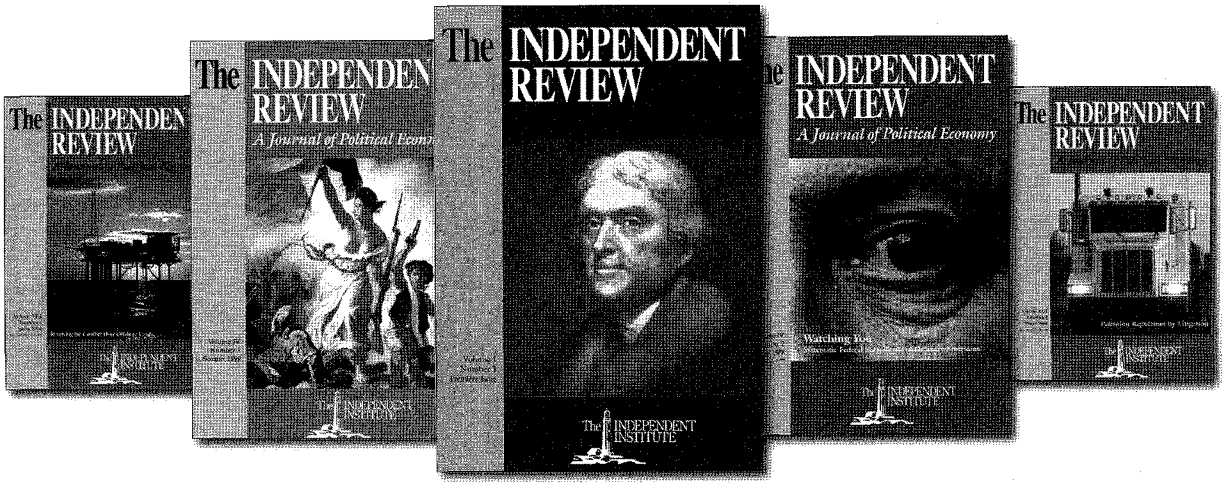
© by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University, 2007

A recent survey of policy makers by Editorial Projects in Education identified only one journal, *Education Next*, among the 10 most influential sources of information on education.

FREE ISSUE

The INDEPENDENT REVIEW

A Journal of Political Economy

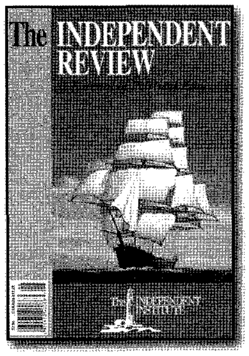

The INDEPENDENT REVIEW
A Journal of Political Economy
The INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE

The INDEPENDENT REVIEW is the acclaimed interdisciplinary journal devoted to the study of political economy and the critical analysis of government policy. It is thoroughly researched, peer-reviewed, and based on scholarship of the highest caliber. However, unlike so many other journals, it is also provocative, lucid, and written in an engaging style. Ranging across the fields of economics, political science, law, history, philosophy, and sociology, **The INDEPENDENT REVIEW** boldly challenges the politicization and bureaucratization of our world, featuring in-depth examinations of past, present, and future policy issues by some of the world's leading scholars and experts. Undaunted and uncompromising, this is the journal that is pioneering future debate!

RECENT FEATURED ARTICLES

The INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Starving the Budgetary Beast


The INDEPENDENT REVIEW

The Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of Privateers

The INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Gold Standards and the Real Bills Doctrine

The INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Government and Science: A Dangerous Liaison

START YOUR TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION TODAY

For even greater savings, subscribe online and pay now to receive 2 free issues.
That's 6 issues for the price of 4.

WWW.INDEPENDENTREVIEW.ORG

1.800.927.8733 · review@independent.org · 1.510.568.6040 (fax)

New Books from the CATO INSTITUTE

School Choice: The Findings

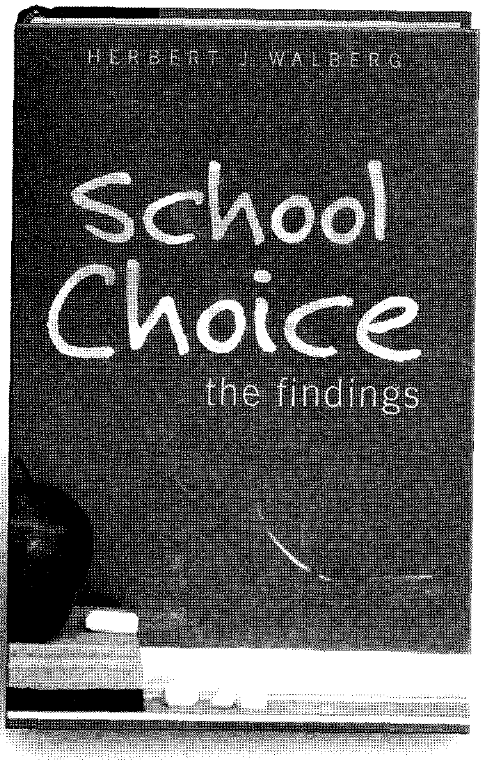
BY HERBERT J. WALBERG

School Choice: The Findings is the most comprehensive and up-to-date analysis available on the effectiveness of charter schools, private schools, and voucher programs. The book overwhelmingly illustrates how and why the consensus of this research is that competition and parental choice promote learning far more effectively than traditional public schools.

> **"Herb Walberg has brought together into one concise document much of what is known about school choice in the United States and around the world."**

—PAUL PETERSON
Director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University

$14.95 • HARDCOVER • 978-1-933995-05-2
$9.95 • PAPERBACK • 978-1-933995-04-5



Feds in the Classroom: How Big Government Corrupts, Cripples, and Compromises American Education

BY NEAL MCCLUSKEY

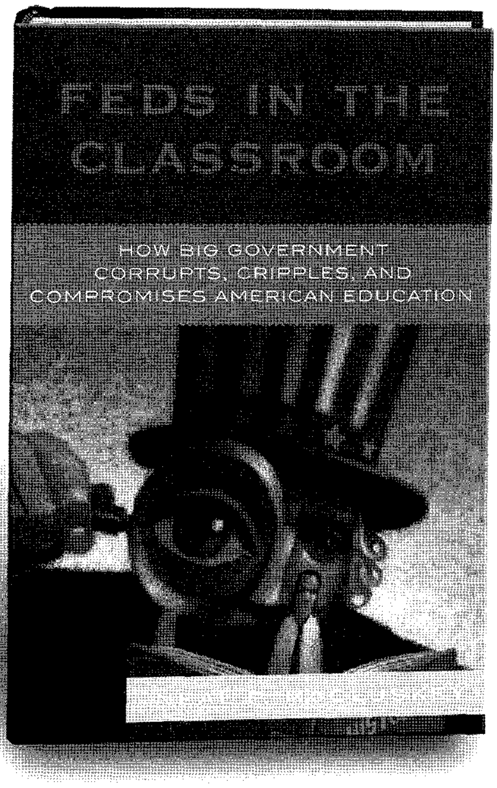
The federal government is deeply entrenched in American public education and virtually dictates what can be taught to students. Why? At what cost? And what are the benefits to public school students? The author challenges the constitutionality of the feds in the classroom and reminds readers that public education has, until recently, been the function of state and local governments.

Published by Rowman & Littlefield

> **"The over-riding value of McCluskey's work is that it shows that most federal educational programs are overwhelmingly useless, if not counter-productive."**

—MYRON LIEBERMAN
Chairman, Education Policy Institute

$19.95 • PAPERBACK • 978-0742548596


FEDS IN THE CLASSROOM
HOW BIG GOVERNMENT CORRUPTS, CRIPPLES, AND COMPROMISES AMERICAN EDUCATION

Buy your copy at bookstores nationwide, by calling 800-767-1241 or visiting www.cato.org

Excellence Reformers Need to Make a Choice

Fourth-grade test scores in reading and math continue to rise, reported Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings this past September in a well-designed press conference releasing the latest (2007) results from the nation's report card, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). But 8th-grade scores are not keeping pace. Though math scores are up a bit, reading scores have stagnated.

Though Secretary Spellings got the media attention she sought, the latest NAEP findings are hardly "news." For more than a decade, progress in elementary school achievement has not translated into comparable gains in middle and high school.

The results must be disappointing for those who have marched fervently under the excellence banner for the past 35 years. Back in 1982, the Reagan administration jump-started that parade by releasing its attention-getting report on the state of American education, A Nation at Risk.

To its credit, the excellence movement halted the steady slide in American education then taking place. But reformers did better at identifying what they wanted to achieve than defining a strategy for getting there. Instead of working out a battle plan, they wandered back and forth between two contradictory goals—choice and accountability.

On the one side, reformers sought to introduce more competition into American K–12 education through charter schools, vouchers, and tax credits. Andy Smarick (see "Wave of the Future," page 38) carries that idea to its logical conclusion by calling for the revamping of urban education through a comprehensive system of charter schools that go well beyond what even Paul Vallas is attempting in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Meanwhile, many embraced a not altogether compatible reform, school accountability, that has extended the regulatory control of the state and federal governments over public schools. By testing students, releasing the results to the public, and attaching rewards and sometimes a few weak sanctions to those results, accountability reformers have attempted to tighten the screws on local school boards, administrators, and classroom teachers. Once student performance was made known, those in charge would turn the school ship aright, reformers thought.

Is accountability the reform of the past?

Until now, accountability has trumped choice. Well before the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, many states launched accountability systems and, urged by the federal legislation, the rest are beginning to catch up. Accountability's edge is undoubtedly due not only to widespread public support for the idea (see "What Americans Think about Their Schools," Fall 2007), but to the fact that, as practiced, it has posed only a minimal threat to the great vested interests of American education: local school boards, state departments of education, schools of education, and teacher unions. Even when headlines scream that students are doing badly, voters do not hold school board members to account, say William Howell and Christopher Berry (see "Accountability Lost," page 66).

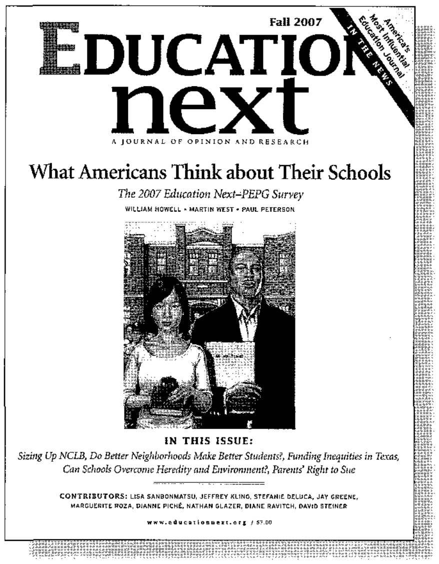
Meanwhile, one has to scour the countryside to find sizable choice interventions. Charter schools, the most popular of them, now enroll but 3 percent of all public school students. Even worse, NCLB, far from unleashing major new choice initiatives as was originally hoped, is instead threatening the future of many struggling urban charter schools. The law's accountability standard expects schools serving the educationally disadvantaged to raise dismally low performance to full proficiency within an unreasonably short period of time. Charter schools, the one type of public school that is actually being held to account by authorizing bodies, are now threatened with closure if they don't perform to standards other public schools can safely ignore.

Yes, choice schools need to be held accountable. But that is best accomplished not through tighter, one-size-fits-all regulation, but through sensible performance measures and a dynamic marketplace for education in which new schools challenge the dominance of decaying ones, much as Smarick suggests.

Not everyone will agree that accountability is the reform of the past. But as the reauthorization deadline for NCLB draws nigh, it is time for the excellence movement to reassess its reform strategy.

— Paul E. Peterson

MISSION STATEMENT In the stormy seas of school reform, this journal will steer a steady course, presenting the facts as best they can be determined, giving voice (without fear or favor) to worthy research, sound ideas, and responsible arguments. Bold change is needed in American K-12 education, but *Education Next* partakes of no program, campaign, or ideology. It goes where the evidence points.


Fall 2007
EDUCATION next
A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH
America's Most Influential Education Journal
IN THE NEWS
What Americans Think about Their Schools
The 2007 Education Next–PEPG Survey
WILLIAM HOWELL • MARTIN WEST • PAUL PETERSON
IN THIS ISSUE:
Sizing Up NCLB, Do Better Neighborhoods Make Better Students?, Funding Inequities in Texas, Can Schools Overcome Heredity and Environment?, Parents' Right to Sue
CONTRIBUTORS: LISA SANBONMATSU, JEFFREY KLING, STEFANIE DELUCA, JAY GREENE, MARGUERITE ROZA, DIANNE PICHÉ, NATHAN GLAZER, DIANE RAVITCH, DAVID STEINER
www.educationnext.org / $7.00

Americans and Their Schools

At a televised presidential debate in Iowa on August 19, the Democratic candidates were asked their views on performance pay for teachers. It turns out they're split—two for it, one on the fence, two against it, and a few who'd prefer to dodge the question. Your poll ("What Americans Think about Their Schools," *features*, Fall 2007) found the same kind of split among Americans generally. But Americans are nearly 50 percent more likely to support performance pay than oppose it. Do you hear that, candidates?

To me, the most important finding was the massive public support for some kind of national standards and assessments—14 percentage points higher than what a recent Educational Testing Service (ETS) poll showed. This raises an interesting question: Why aren't more presidential candidates coming out for national standards? It's clearly a popular idea. Part of the problem is the early primary season. Iowa and New Hampshire are strong local-control states, and candidates who need those primary votes are hesitant to talk about anything that might challenge local values.

There are ways for candidates to provide the kind of strong leadership America so desperately needs on this issue without "mandating" national standards. The goal should be a vigorous *national effort* to raise American standards, one that is sensitive to political realities but bold enough to ensure results. What if a candidate pledged to work with governors and other state leaders to raise standards from the ground up? The federal government could provide financial support for a consortium of states and nonprofit groups to create "model" standards and then reward those states that set comparable standards with extra federal funding or flexibility under No Child Left Behind.

I hope that by the time this issue is published, every presidential candidate will have proposed a solution. Based on your poll, Americans are way out ahead of most candidates on this issue. It's time for the candidates to catch up.

Roy Romer
Chairman
Strong American Schools

Too little is known about the public's attitudes toward education policy. As chairman of the Florida State Board of Education, I was struck by the difficulty of creating public policy from public opinion. The *Education Next* poll shows that public policy does not mirror public opinion. While the latter reflects a positive view toward reform (choice, accountability), the individuals, groups and institutions that are actively engaged (as opposed to the public at large) are more likely to protect the status quo.

As noted in your article, Florida is the only state to use state tests to determine students' promotion from the 3rd grade. The public would generally support this policy, so why is such a policy so difficult to implement? The active minority trumps the inactive majority.

The goal for education policy is to enhance all students' achievement each school year, to provide a year's education every school year. In order to achieve this objective, we must have transparency about student proficiency and teacher competence and achievement as well. It is interesting that your survey portrays the public's desire to have accountability for student performance, but not for teacher performance.

Changing education policy to reflect public opinion will require harnessing the participation of more people who hold the majority view. They must become involved at the school board level and advocate for more transparency, accountability, and choice.

Phil Handy
Retired Chairman
Florida State Board of Education

Moving to Opportunity

In addition to the clear presentation of empirical findings, both articles on the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program ("New Kids on the Block," *research*, and "All Over the Map," *features*, Fall 2007) do a good job of summarizing problems associated with the MTO experiment's design and implementation. These weaknesses are often overlooked when media commentators use the results of the MTO experiment to discredit housing voucher programs for the poor, such as those proposed by Senator John Edwards. See, for example, David Brooks in the *New York Times* (July 31, 2007) and Alec MacGillis in the *Washington Post* (May 7, 2007).

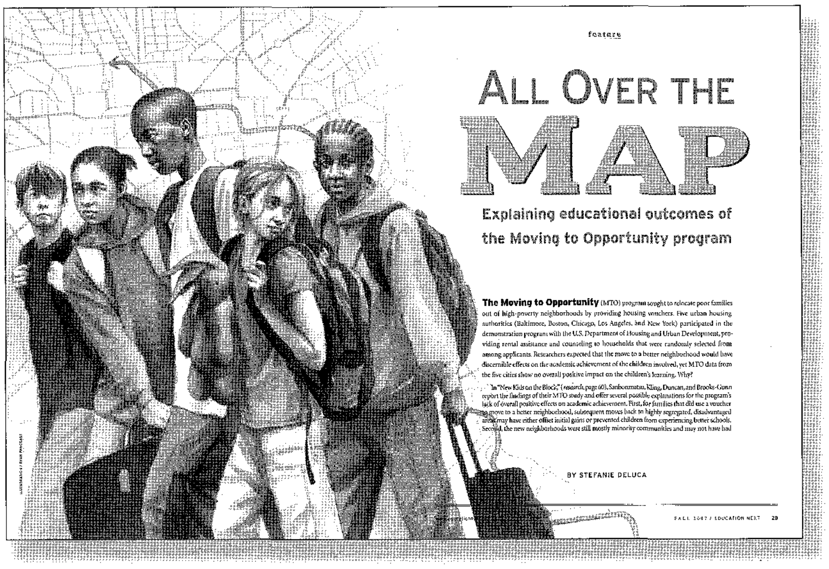
It is important to emphasize that many MTO movers relocated to neighborhoods that were not significantly better than the ones they left. For example, three-fifths of these families entered highly racially segregated neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods tend to be considerably less advantaged than integrated areas. Also, at the time of the interim evaluation, as many as 41 percent of those who entered low-poverty neighborhoods had moved back to more-disadvantaged neighborhoods. As

Susan Clampet-Lundquist and Douglas Massey point out in a forthcoming *American Journal of Sociology* article, because of such extensive outmigration, these families accumulated relatively little time in areas of low poverty, not to mention in those low-poverty neighborhoods that are racially integrated.

Finally, nearly three-quarters of the children in the MTO experiment remained in the same school district and were often in the same schools at the time of the interim evaluation. In accounting for these findings, DeLuca's research insightfully reveals that many of the MTO parents in Baltimore lack adequate information for decisions on school choice. "It is quite striking," she states, "how little some parents thought that school mattered for learning, relative to what the child contributed though hard work and a 'good attitude.'"

Sanbonmatsu and her colleagues state, "Research has in fact found surprisingly little convincing evidence that neighborhoods play a key role in children's educational success." It would have been more prudent to simply state that research raises questions about the extent to which neighborhoods affect children's educational success. Unfortunately, the evaluations of the MTO experiment have not resolved these questions.

William Julius Wilson
Harvard University



features

All Over the MAP

Explaining educational outcomes of the Moving to Opportunity program

The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program sought to relocate poor families out of high-poverty neighborhoods by providing housing vouchers. Five urban housing authorities (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York) participated in the demonstration program with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, providing rental assistance and counseling to households that were randomly selected from among applicants. Researchers expected that the move to a better neighborhood would have discernible effects on the academic achievement of the children involved, yet MTO data from the five cities show no overall positive impact on the children's learning. Why?

In "New Kids on the Block," (*research*, page 60), Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, and Brooks-Gunn report the findings of their MTO study and offer several possible explanations for the program's lack of overall positive effects on academic achievement. First, for families that did use a voucher to move to a better neighborhood, subsequent moves back to highly segregated, disadvantaged areas may have either offset initial gains or prevented children from experiencing better schools. Second, the new neighborhoods were still mostly minority communities and may not have had

BY STEFANIE DELUCA

FALL 2007 / EDUCATION NEXT 29

One hardly knows what to make of the two articles on the HUD Moving to Opportunity program. At first blush, the results are disappointing for someone like me, who would like to break up the concentrations of low-income and racially and ethnically isolated families found in many urban neighborhoods and as a result see improvements in their children's school achievement. The MTO program seems to have accomplished family mobility to some degree with their relocation to somewhat more affluent communities. But there was virtually no effect on the achievement results for children in these families. I find myself mimicking James Carville and crying out, "It's the schools, stupid!"

Sanbonmatsu and her colleagues do a very nice job of speculating on why there was little if any improvement in student test scores—the kids were already enrolled in better, out-of-neighborhood schools; families moved again, back to less affluent neighborhoods; poverty rates increased quickly in the new neighborhoods; the new neighborhoods were also racially isolated and had poor-quality schools. And the data indicate that there probably was not much real income integration but rather movement of students from low-poverty to somewhat lesser-poverty schools but not to middle-income schools.

My observations of many high-performing, high-poverty schools tell me that good schools can compensate for home and neighborhood weaknesses. They have strong leadership, talented teachers, a coherent curriculum, and often expand the time of student learning. They are found in low-income and segregated neighborhoods and as magnets or other schools of choice in less isolated neighborhoods.

The MTO program makes good sense, but it won't result in better achievement for low-income kids until there is a much larger supply of high-quality schools for them to attend.

Cynthia G. Brown
Director of Education Policy
Center for American Progress

IQ and Education Reform

It is a rare treat to read an article ("The Odd Couple," *check the facts*, Fall 2007) that calls me a crank but nonetheless gives a fair statement of my position. Two quick points to highlight how Jay Greene and I might pursue our disagreements empirically: Professor Greene cites education reforms that have produced gains of about a third of a standard deviation. I accept that evidence. But in response I would cite the extensive evidence that pretest–post-test changes shrink to a fraction of their initial size within a few years (see chapter 17 of *The Bell Curve*). Then I would argue that even the initial gains do not challenge my thesis about the limits that cognitive ability places on what education can do. Any gain is welcome, but an increase of a third of a standard deviation does not qualitatively change a student's life chances.

Can we institute an additional intervention that raises the student's achievement by another third of a standard deviation? Then another, then another? The answer may be yes for high-ability students in terrible schools. But I argue the answer is no for those who are below average in cognitive ability, and here is the second disagreement that can potentially be explored with data. I contend that if I am given IQ scores of children at age 6 in developed nations, I can predict the reading and mathematics competence of those in the bottom half of the IQ distribution when they have reached age 18—for students of every ethnicity, in every education system. My predictions will sometimes be wrong, demarcating the potential of education reform. But, overall, my predictions will be remarkably right, demarcating the limits of education reform.

CHARLES MURRAY
W. H. Brady Scholar
American Enterprise Institute

NCLB Forum

As the articles on No Child Left Behind ("Will NCLB Hit the Wall?" *forum*, Fall 2007) make clear, there is reason to wonder about the future of President Bush's signature education law.

Whether or not No Child Left Behind is reauthorized and what any revised law might look like will be a matter of politics more than policy. Well into the implementation of the law, we have learned that those who opposed it initially still do and those who supported it initially are having second thoughts. We have also learned just how talented the education establishment is at getting around some of the more controversial aspects of the law, like school choice and supplemental educational services, and how adept state and local officials are at changing the rules in the middle of the game to enhance the image of their schools.

The law itself has changed the terms of the national education debate. Now there is an unrelenting focus on results, even if there is debate over how best to measure them. Now policymakers are forced to confront the achievement gap, even as they seem somewhat bewildered about what to do about it. More information about America's schools is available today than ever before, although that information is sometimes packaged in less than fully transparent ways. The question remains, has NCLB done much to improve education in this country?

Public policy is essentially an exercise in manipulating human nature. It is about trying to get people to do things they normally don't want to do or to get them to stop doing things they normally want to do. NCLB's accountability provisions created an "education bottom line." It was hoped educators would try to improve that bottom line. In far too many instances, they have sought instead to redefine the standards and measures on which the bottom line depends.

NCLB was an important and necessary first step in what will be a long, extended campaign to change education in America. But far more fundamental change—revolutionary change—is needed. And revolutions don't come from the top. They are the product of deep-seated frustration, resentment, and disappointment felt by people who become fed up with the status quo. Until that happens, the status quo in American education will remain what it is. With NCLB in place, we just know more about it.

GENE HICKOK
Senior Policy Director
Dutko Worldwide
and former U.S. Deputy
Secretary of Education

Funding Texas Schools

Like Marguerite Roza ("Do Districts Fund Schools Fairly?" *research*, Fall 2007), we at Education Resource Strategies (ERS) are concerned that school districts often give some schools more resources than others, with no clear strategy that relates to school or student needs. Roza and her colleagues suggest that these school-to-school differences are hard to explain using the institutional factors that they include in their study. We agree with this general point. The article highlights the need for additional, deeper research in three areas: school size; how much schools spend of their general-fund dollars to support students with special needs; and the impact of categorical revenues.

Our research consistently shows that school size explains much of the funding differences between schools within a district, especially when schools have fewer than 300 students. A revised version of the Weighted Student Index (WSI) might yield the same finding in Texas.

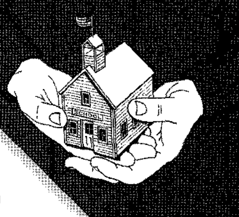
Second, school districts spend up to 50 percent more on special education students than they receive for those students. While Roza was careful to exclude noncategorical revenues dedicated for special education students, her data did not allow her to measure this additional spending. Schools with high percentages of high-needs special education students might account for part of her unexplained variation.

As Roza and colleagues point out, further research must explore the impact of categorical funds. As a field, we must find better ways to account for how academic, social, and emotional needs vary across different student populations so that we can then study whether schools are getting enough resources, from all sources, to meet these needs. For their part, district-level leaders must be strategic and transparent about how they allocate resources to schools.

KAREN HAWLEY MILES
Executive Director

STEPHEN FRANK
Director
Education Resource Strategies

the legal beat



Doubtful Jurisprudence

Court offers schools little guidance

BY JOSHUA DUNN AND MARTHA DERTHICK

The reconstituted Supreme Court of President Bush and Chief Justice John G. Roberts rendered two significant constitutional decisions about schools in its October 2006 term, one "for" and one "against" school administrators. Their common thread is a want of clarity and hence an invitation to more litigation.

The jurisprudence produced by the early Roberts Court on schools is steeped in doubt.

The case that went in favor of a school administration was *Morse v. Frederick*, more engagingly known as "Bong Hits 4 Jesus."

This was the legend on a 14-foot banner that Joseph Frederick, a high school student in Juneau, Alaska, unfurled in 2002 at a school-sponsored parade. Detecting a celebration of drug use—a bong is a marijuana water pipe—the school principal, Deborah Morse, ordered Mr. Frederick to lower the banner and suspended him for 10 days. He sued, claiming a violation of his First Amendment rights to free speech. A three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit not only ruled for him, but also concluded that Ms. Morse was personally liable.

Robert's opinion for the court, in which four other joined, did not go so far as to say that students have no First Amendment free-speech rights, as Justice Clarence Thomas wished. Thomas would have overruled *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, a Vietnam-era (1969) case involving students who wore black armbands in protest of the war. In *Tinker* the Court ruled for the students and famously said that neither students nor teachers "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." Nor did the Court duck the constitutional question altogether, as Justice Stephen Breyer wished. Breyer said that the Court need not decide the First Amendment issue on the merits, but should merely hold that Ms. Morse was immune to Frederick's claim for monetary damages.

The majority ruled that students at school or a school function do not have a First Amendment right to promote illegal drugs. Breyer worried that, rather than being a help to teachers, this seeming victory would merely incite the nation's adolescents to mount new challenges. What if a student flew a "Wine Sips 4 Jesus" banner, Justice John Paul Stevens mischievously asked. The good news for school administrators was that neither he nor any other member of the Court believed that Ms. Morse should be liable for damages.

The case that went against school administrators—really two cases, one from Seattle and a companion from Jefferson County, Kentucky—involved school districts' classifying and assigning students by race in order to achieve racial balance. A majority opinion written by Chief Justice Roberts argued that the Constitution is colorblind and struck the plans down. But though Justice Anthony Kennedy found defects in the two plans and therefore joined in the result, making a 5–4 majority possible, he did not embrace Roberts's enunciation of the constitutional principle. The Constitution cannot be colorblind in the real world, he said, and school districts can adopt race-conscious measures as long as they don't treat "each student in a different fashion solely on the basis of a systematic, individual typing by race."

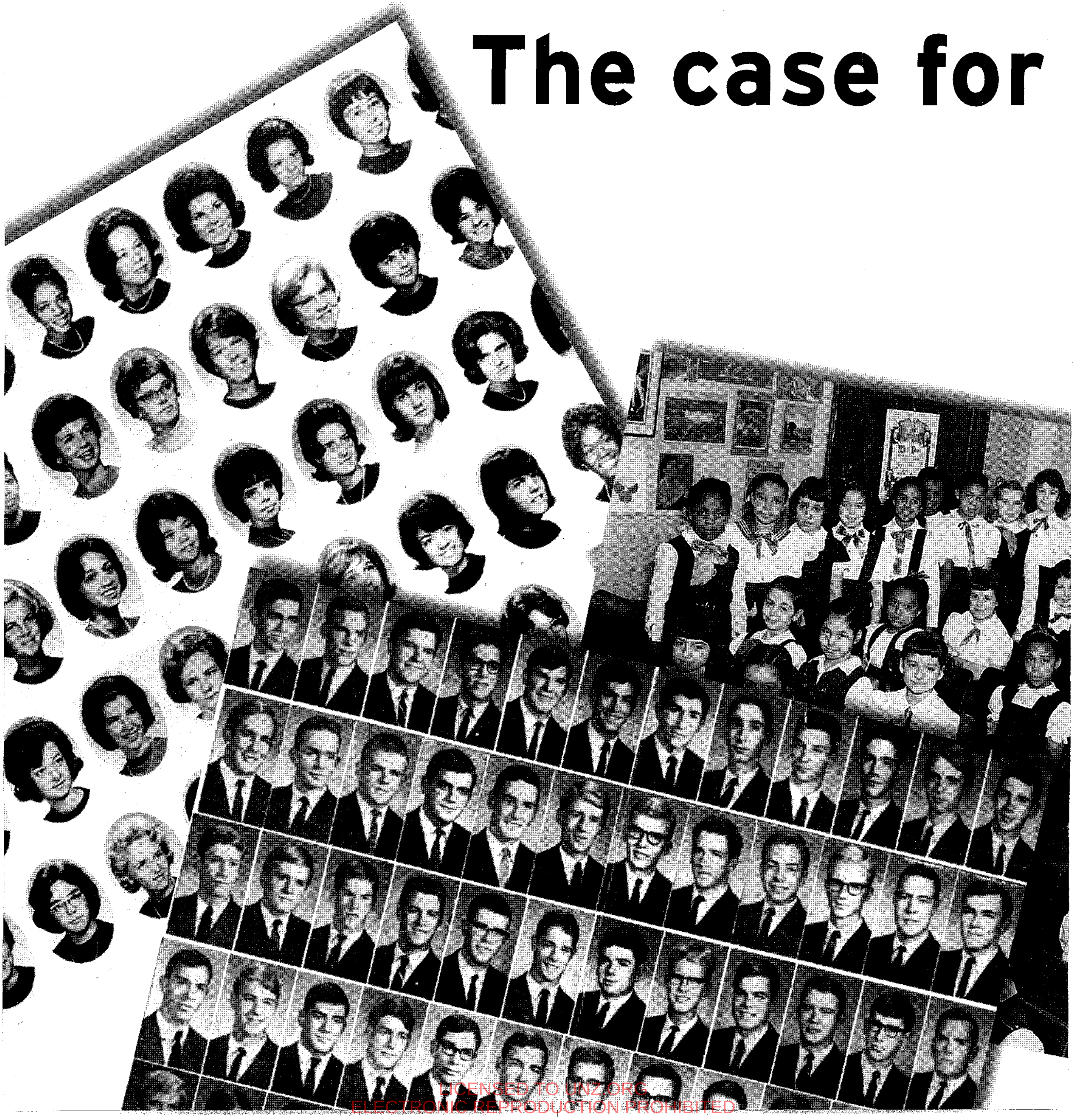
Justice Kennedy offered what he regarded as acceptable methods of considering race such as "strategic site selection of new schools; drawing attendance zones with general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods; allocating resources for special programs; recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion; and tracking enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race." But knowing the general demographics of neighborhoods or recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion would seem to require some systematic, individual typing by race. Such confusions led commentators on the Kennedy opinion to despair and will likely have the same effect on school administrators. Local districts are obliquely invited to construct affirmative action plans, with the knowledge that they may in time be scrutinized by a divided and inscrutable Court.

"Liberty finds no refuge in a jurisprudence of doubt," the Court said in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), in a rhetorical phrase commonly attributed to Kennedy. But the jurisprudence produced by the early Roberts Court on schools is steeped in doubt. The Court has taken a fresh plunge into the constitutional thicket, wherein it is the prerogative of judges to write and rewrite the maps.

Joshua Dunn is assistant professor of polical science at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs. Martha Derthick is professor emerita of government at the University of Virginia.

Learning

The case for



feature

Separately

single-sex schools

BY PETER MEYER

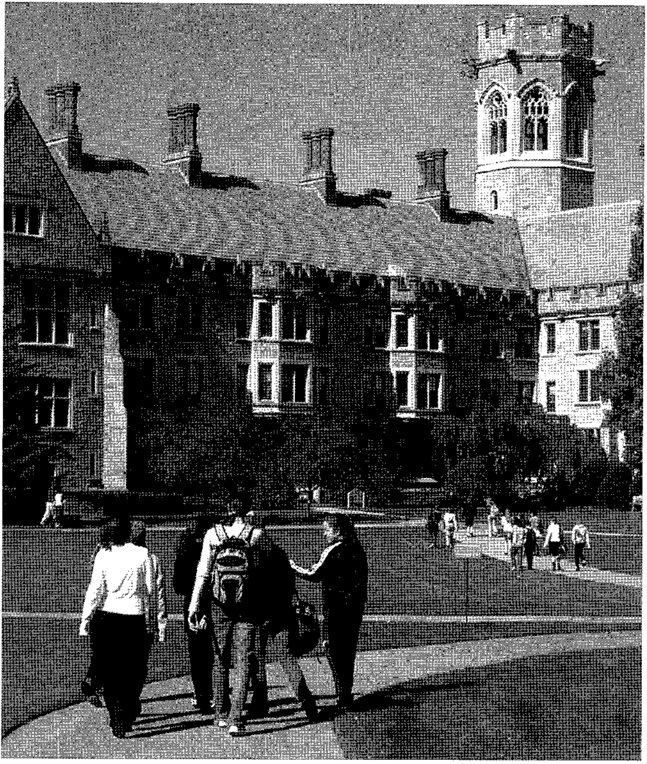
Susan Vincent reached into the cage and pulled out a small yellow bird, saying, "This is Kiwi. He loved us, but he was lonely." It is a lovely spring day in Spanish Harlem on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and Vincent, a former children's clothing designer turned award-winning high-school science teacher, is explaining some facts about the facts of life. "We had to get Kiwi a mate. It was a perfect way for the girls to learn something about nature, about birds, about"—she smiles, holding little Kiwi up—"about the birds and the bees."

It was, as they say in the field, "a teachable moment." And for Vincent it was much more teachable because all of her 10th-grade students were girls. "There was no giggling and whispering, no holding back," she recalls. "The girls gathered round and we talked about the mating habits of birds and they asked good questions and learned a lot. Boys would have been a big distraction."

It seems so logical. Separate boys and girls so they can get their work done. It was clear to me and my classmates 40 years ago, as we gazed out the window during English

Private Schools

The private-school sector supplies the financially and the intellectually well endowed with an array of single-sex schooling options. Below are profiles of the oldest girls' school and the oldest boys' school in the country. Both are distinguished by academic excellence, and their respective leaders are resolutely committed to single gender as a vital part of the school's program.



Emma Willard Founded in 1814 in Troy, New York, Emma Willard was among the first schools in the country to offer girls an academic curriculum. Emma Hart Willard, a teacher, principal, author, and mother of four, determined to offer girls the same education as boys then received in their schools, and over the ensuing 193 years, the school—renamed for its foundress in 1895—has cultivated a reputation for serious academic study. Today the school has more than 300 students in grades 9–12, 60 percent of them boarders, from all over the world; an ample endowment of more than $100 million; and a list of illustrious alumnae (from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Jane Fonda). The school receives several hundred applications a year, accepts some 150 and ends up enrolling 90 new students, favoring the bright (61st percentile on the SSAT or higher) and the extracurricular-inclined. Tuition is $24,500 for day students and $37,300 for boarders, but 41 percent get aid of some sort. The school has a $2.5 million financial aid budget.

At the turn of the twentieth century the school moved to Mount Ida, just north of Troy. Its current 137-acre campus sits in a leafy, middle-class neighborhood, and three of its Tudor-Gothic stone buildings, built in 1910, are on the National Register of Historic Places. The setting is so gorgeous that two movies were filmed here—ironically, telling the stories of boys' schools: *The Scent of a Woman* and *The Emperor's Club*.

"Emma Willard was better at getting the atmosphere correct," says recent alumna Louisa Thompson. "They know what's good about single-sex education. It's not about empowerment, but about getting a good education."

Louisa's parents, my neighbors Tony Thompson and Margaret Seliske, decided after years of trying to support their daughter in our troubled local public school to pull the plug in 7th grade. "I recall talking to her Spanish teacher [at the public school] for a half hour one time before I realized that the teacher wasn't talking about Louisa," explains Tony. "The teacher had 250 kids [in her various classes]. There were lots of disruptions in each class." It was then that they decided to cut the ties. "Louisa was just not getting a serious education."

Academics is in Emma Willard's DNA. In the Hunter science building, for instance, Angela Miklavcic, a tall and serious woman, is lecturing her 18 students on fractals and helping them work on an esterification project. "An ester is formed when a carboxylic acid reacts with an alcohol in a process known as esterification," the girls learn. "Esters are fragrant organic compounds used commercially in products such as perfume, deodorant, and processed foods...."

On a large wall in Slocum Hall a board is covered with college acceptances for the Class of 2007. They include the University of Paris, Barnard, Purdue, Princeton, Cornell, Yale, Vassar.

"You hear from girls who have left and gone on to college," says Steve Ricci, the school's manager of publications and public relations. He smiles. "And they're amazed at how easy Harvard and Yale are. It's okay, they say, but it's no Emma Willard."

Outside a big room on the second floor of Slocum Hall, 20 girls are scattered on the floor, taking a break from their jazz dance class and are more than happy—they are girls!—to talk about their single-sex school:

> *It's easier to focus on your class work and to open up about how you feel.... The sports are nice. They push you. But it's small and it feels like a community.... Last year I was in Troy public schools. And I was on a math team. Me and five boys. You get really tired of dealing with boys. They're always a distraction in class.... Yes, boys are very immature. But teachers always favored them.... I'm an athlete and resented the fact that guys had the field, uniforms, all the good stuff. We got leftovers.... We still like boys. By now maybe they are mature enough to hang out with.*

class in our all-boys high school (a Catholic seminary) and watched the teenage kids from town "making out" on a stone wall; at least it was clear to Father Ignatius, who would threaten a "bastinado with salt rubbed in the wounds" if we didn't focus on the sentence that needed diagramming.

"We can concentrate a lot better without boys," is a comment I heard dozens of times in the course of researching this story. Boys seem less sure of the benefits. "Yeah, it's okay," says a student at the private all-boys Roxbury Latin School, outside of Boston (see sidebar, page 14). But the headmaster, Kerry Brennan, is certain: "Young men are able to focus much more ably on academics without the girls."

Rosemary Salomone, professor of law at St. John's University and author of the 2003 book *Same, Different, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling*, agrees: "Many students in single-sex classes report feeling more comfortable raising their hands and expressing uncertainty regarding a lesson or topic without fear of embarrassment or teasing from the opposite sex."

The fact that researchers like Salomone are talking about single-gender education represents a sea change in attitudes—and policies and practices, a change that was formalized by the historic rewriting of Title IX of the federal Education Amendments in 2006. The new rules give local districts the option of offering single-gender public schools and programs for the first time in more than 30 years. The regulations permit single-sex classrooms when districts "provide a rationale," "provide a coeducational class" as well, and "conduct a review every two years." Districts may operate a single-sex school as long as they provide equal services either in a coed school or a school for the opposite gender. Charter schools are exempt from all restrictions. Prior to these changes, educators lived in a vague legal world, at the mercy of a Supreme Court decision (the 1996 Virginia Military Institute [VMI] case, *United States v. Virginia*), which required an "exceedingly persuasive justification" of anyone wanting to set up single-sex schools or classes.

Districts may operate a single-sex school as long as they provide equal services either in a coed school or a school for the opposite gender. Charter schools are exempt for all restrictions.

As late as 1990, James Coleman remarked that that it was considered suspect to even study the question of single-sex schooling. The famous University of Chicago sociologist noted that there were times when "a societal consensus" dictates that "one institution is *right*" and, he concluded, "coeducation is such an institution."

At the time, Coleman was writing to introduce a pioneering book on the subject, *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* by Providence College sociologist Cornelius Riordan. The questions Riordan was asking—"just what are the consequences of single-sex and coeducational schools for those who pass through them? Specifically, what are the intellectual consequences, the psychological consequences, and the social consequences?"—had not been asked, or answered, before. Coleman attributed the research failure to "the force of conventional values." Riordan's research compared outcomes for graduates of single-sex Catholic schools with those for graduates of coed Catholic schools. He found that single-sex schooling helps to improve academic achievement, with benefits greater for girls than boys, and that underprivileged children derived the most benefit. His book concluded that we had to "give students some measure of access to single-sex education."

Roxbury Latin Sociologist Cornelius Riordan didn't hesitate when asked which single-sex schools represented the best of the breed, "You have to see Roxbury Latin. They've been doing it longer than anyone else."

Indeed, it was King Charles I, in 1645, who gave the Rev. John Eliot a charter to start a school in Boston to, as Eliot said, "fit [students] for public service both in church and commonwealth in succeeding ages." And it has been going ever since. All boys, all the time.

Roxbury Latin—the school still requires three years of Latin—enjoys the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating school in America (though that statement always comes with a footnote: Boston Latin was founded ten years earlier, in 1635, but closed during the Revolutionary War: "War's begun, school's done," announced Headmaster John Lovell).

So successful has Roxbury Latin been that it now has one of the largest endowments of any private secondary school (over $140 million), "an outlandish amount of money for just 290 boys," says Phil Thornton, director of development at the school, who points out that over 50 percent of alumni give to the alumni fund. But this means that the school can have a need-blind admission policy—money is no object, brains are—and can keep tuition relatively low: $17,900, 30 to 50 percent less than most of its competitors, and some $11,000 below cost. Some of the students pay $50 a year. Not easy to get in, of course. There's an application essay, an interview, an IQ test, ISEE and SSAT tests. The acceptance rate is 14 percent, which is why the student body scores in the 95th percentile on the SAT.

A third of its 36 teachers have been here for 25 years. There are no teachers unions. Top faculty make over $100,000. But they also do many different things. Tom Walsh, the school's director of college guidance, also teaches Latin and Greek and coaches lacrosse. "One of the secrets to our success," says Headmaster Kerry Brennan, who is also an English teacher and basketball coach, "is that we are independent. We can do what we want."

Character also counts. "We care most of all what kind of person a boy is," says Brennan. Keeping the school single sex is very important to both the character-building and academic mission. Paul Sugg, dean of students and a biology teacher at the school for 23 years (and currently varsity soccer and junior varsity wrestling coach), recalls a period, in the 1980s, when "the school had to actively advocate for single sex.... When parents came in for their interview, we asked them if they were prepared to back that. There was some hot discussion, and it got confrontational and combative, but we wanted total compliance. Now, thank God, for the last five to ten years we haven't had to ask the question."

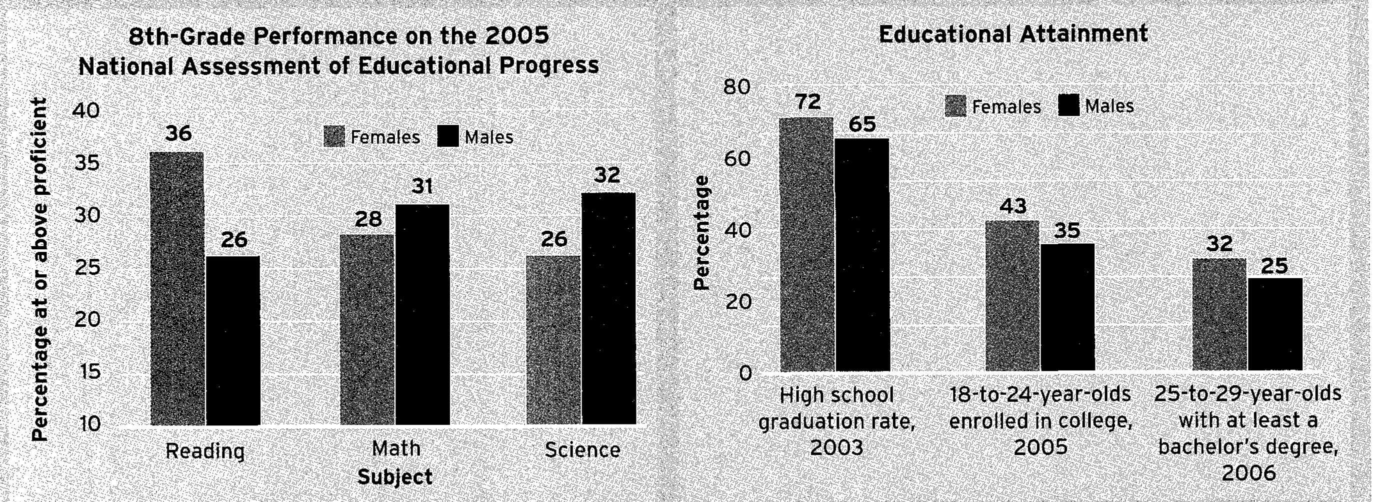
As is the case in single-sex girls' schools, faculty and students at Roxbury Latin see the single-gender environment as liberating rather than confining. More than 60 percent of the boys are in a choral group, and 90 percent are on at least one athletic team. "The big coed high school settings can be pretty repressed in many ways," says Sugg. "Our kids don't feel pigeonholed, don't have to hold onto a role and so are more willing to take a chance.... You can get on stage and not have to be embarrassed because you're an athlete and what would the girls think.... At this age, with the onset of puberty and the raging hormones, girls can be a very big distraction. It just makes academics easier without them."

And academics here are not an afterthought, as is evident when looking at the Advanced Placement exam schedule: Government & Politics, French, Computer Science, Statistics, Calculus, English Lit, French Lit, U.S. History, Music Theory, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Art History, Economics (macro and micro), Latin Vergil, Latin Literature....

"By the way," says Brennan, with a smile, "we have no gangs here."

Clear Differences (Figure 1)

On standardized tests, boys score higher in math and science, and girls outperform boys in reading. When it comes to graduating from high school and college, women are carrying the day.

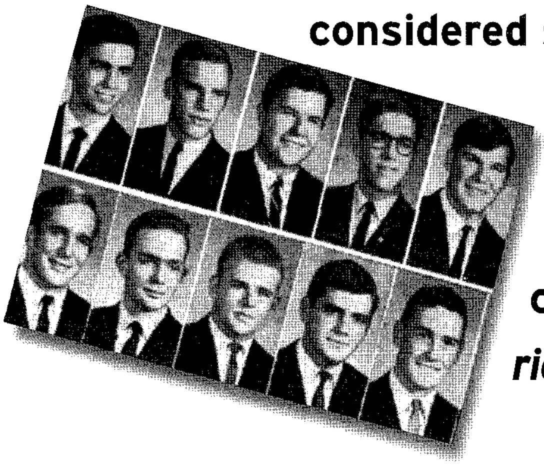


SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Education Progress

SOURCES: Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, "Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates" (Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Civic Report No. 48); U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

Going, Going, All but Gone

While there are no reliable counts of single-gender schools in the first half of the 20th century, best estimates are that most were schools for white boys. Many of the girls' schools that did exist early on served as "finishing" schools rather than preparation for college. Coleman wrote, "Single-sex school was, at the outset, schooling for boys. Schooling for girls was an afterthought, either in single-sex institutions of their own, or with boys, where small numbers made single-sex institutions inefficient. Boys' schools, however, were dominant, and the elimination of single-sex schooling could be seen as elimination of that dominance."

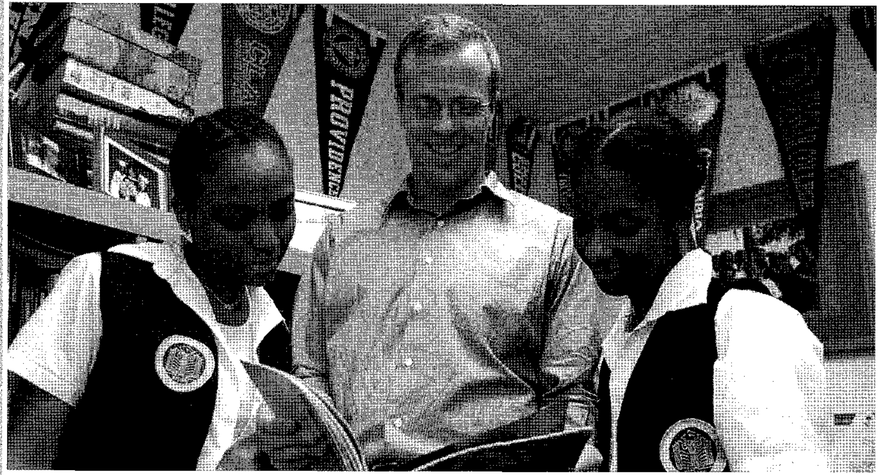


As late as 1990, James Coleman remarked that it was considered suspect to even study the question of single-sex schooling. The famous University of Chicago sociologist noted that there were times when "a societal consensus" dictates that "one institution is *right*," and "coeducation is such an institution."

Public Schools

Leonard Sax of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education is almost dismissive of the private sector schools and ticks off a half dozen public schools whose single-gender students are randomly selected. "Same class size, same funding per pupil as their coed public counterparts," he says. We have chosen a charter to profile because charters are public, operate with public school budgets (or less), often have student bodies of very limited means—and are extremely successful.

The Young Women's Leadership School The *New York Post* headline last spring said it all: "Grad Tidings." The paper noted that the graduation rates of the city's schools had risen, to 50 percent, and ran a chart showing the "best and worst." And there at the top, under "best," was The Young Women's Leadership School: 100 percent.



Ann Tisch recalls "as if it were yesterday" the day in 1988 when she conceived of an all-girls school. She was on assignment for NBC's *Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*, reporting a story about a large inner-city Milwaukee high school that had just opened a daycare center at the school. "I was interviewing these teen moms, whose babies were down the hall, and I said to one of them, 'So where do you see yourself five years from now?' And she just started to weep." The light bulbs went on for Tisch, and she recalls saying to herself at that moment, "I don't think we're doing enough for these kids."

Several years later, when Tisch left NBC, she returned to that moment and that insight and said to herself, "Why not offer those girls the same path that affluent girls are offered. A completely different path. A college preparatory path—and keep them out of the daycare business altogether. You could really start to break some cycles."

Tisch successfully fended off the National Organization for Women and the American Civil Liberties Union. She stared down the zeitgeist and started a school that educated only girls. And now her school is at the top. And it got that way by focusing on academics, discipline (the girls wear uniforms), and college—and eliminating the distraction of boys.

"Now that I've experienced the closest thing there is to a boyless society," said teacher Emily Wylie in an NPR commentary, "I'm prepared to say that it is different. My girls-school girls are louder socially and more fearless than girls I've taught in coed schools. Everyone here wants to read Hamlet's lines, not Ophelia's, when we act out the play."

The Young Women's Leadership School (known to everyone as TYWLS, or "twills") is a big city school, located on the top five floors of an 11-story office building on busy East 106th Street in Manhattan, one of the poorest neighborhoods in New York. The school has 420 students, all girls, in grades 7–12. There are no admissions exams. "Anyone eligible to be promoted who attends a family conference and agrees to wear a uniform and participate in the college-bound program may apply," says Kathleen Ponze, principal of TYWLS for five years and now director of education at the Young Women's Leadership Foundation. The school receives three to four times as many applicants as it has openings. And even after the selection process ("we try to select a range of students we think will benefit from what we offer," says Ponze), all the students are from disadvantaged homes—many of their parents did not graduate from high school, let alone attend college. TYWLS has a full-time college counselor and tours of college campuses begin in 7th grade.

TYWLS is intensely focused on education. "We have to be," says Ponze, who grew up an "Army brat" and attended 16 different schools before graduating high school. "These kids come from one of the roughest neighborhoods in America. I saw a report in the *Daily News* that said that the area between 119th and 126th streets along Lexington has the highest concentration of convicted criminals in the city. That's their neighborhood."

Ponze was assistant principal at a large, "dysfunctional" middle school in the city when she saw an ad for principal of a new all-girls public college-prep school and applied. "I read all the research, and thought that my own personal experience in all-girls schools had been quite rewarding. Girls in the public school system really do deserve a choice." And as a mother of a boy, she related to the other side as well. "They're always wanting to take boys to the neurologist and get them medicated up—for what? For being a boy."

In the 1960s and 1970s, the civil rights and feminist movements combined their equality crusade fervor to "open" previously exclusive men's schools to women, and white schools to blacks. Public single-gender schools were all but eliminated in the process. Boston Latin, one of the oldest and most prestigious public schools in America, succumbed to coeducation in 1972, the same year that Congress passed Title IX mandating equal education for the sexes. Central High School in Philadelphia, founded in 1838, may have been the last all-boys public school in America when it finally went coed in 1983.

Although insulated from laws governing public schools, private schools felt the pressure as well, and many single-gender institutions, often fighting for economic survival, opened their doors to both sexes after 1970. For example, the Nichols School for boys in Buffalo, founded in 1892, accepted girls in 1973. Tabor Academy in Marion, Massachusetts, began in 1876 with male and female students, was a school for boys by the 1950s, and became coed again in 1979.

There was ample evidence to justify feminists' skepticism about single-gender education, since for many decades (even centuries) such schooling was meant only to reinforce gender stereotypes and prejudices.

Yale went coed (in 1969), as did dozens of colleges and universities. The wave of coeducation sentiment was intense: even institutions that had arisen to offer women opportunity they couldn't get in a man's world were closed. In barely more than two decades, from 1960 to 1980, over half of the 268 women-only colleges in America closed, and many others went coed. By 1993, according to the National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning, there were just 83 women-only colleges.

"Single-sex schooling seemed to be dying a slow but certain death," writes Salomone. Coeducational institutions were considered "more socially appropriate, liberating, and enlightened."

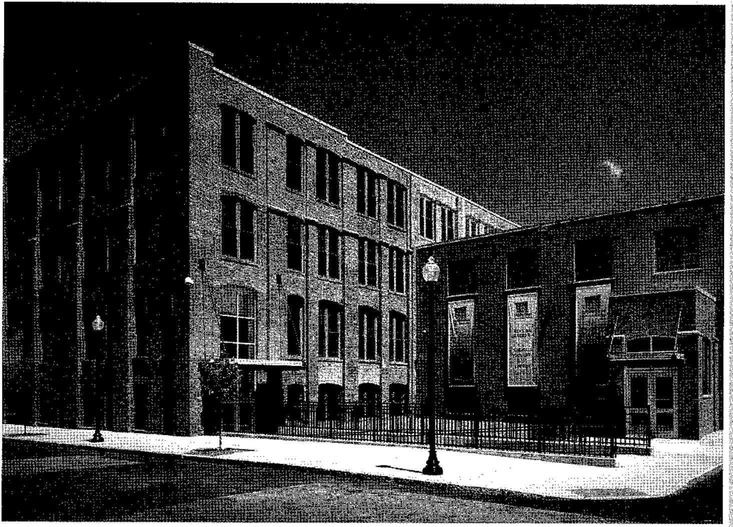
There was ample evidence to justify feminists' skepticism about single-gender education, since for many decades (even centuries) such schooling was meant only to reinforce gender stereotypes and prejudices. "Only in recent decades have societies seriously begun to unlock the full potential of girls," wrote David Von Drehle in *Time* magazine last summer, "but the cultivation of boys has been an obsession for thousands of years."

Tinkering Around the Coed Edges

Once single-sex schools were knocked out of the ring, the gender fights occurred almost exclusively inside the coed arena. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) published a series of studies in the 1990s called *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*, which highlighted the fact that girls aged 9 to 15 suffered from lower self-esteem, less willingness to stand up for their views with teachers, and lower interest in science and mathematics than boys. The AAUW report sparked an intense national debate, with its findings that girls were disadvantaged in classrooms by, among many inequities, being called upon less frequently and encouraged less than male students.

Great efforts were made to make schools more girl-friendly—introducing new math and science curricula and teaching methods, for example—which seemed to succeed only in creating a "boys crisis." "[B]oys rather than girls are now on the short end of the gender gap in many secondary school outcomes," said Cornelius Riordan in 2000. "Currently, boys are less likely than girls to be in an academic (college preparatory) curriculum. They have lower educational and occupational expectations, have lower reading and writing test scores, and expect to complete their schooling at an earlier age" (see Figure 1).

Brighter Choice Charter Schools It has no endowment, does not pay any of its teachers $100,000, is only five years old, and has a campus that is not much bigger than the single building it occupies. The K-4 school that building houses—along a corridor of poverty and despair in Albany, New York, that would shake even the resolute bones of an Emma Willard or John Eliot—is the best in the city.



"We beat the white schools," beams Tom Carroll, founder of Brighter Choice Charter Schools (BCCS). "We've turned the achievement gap upside down."

Tom Carroll is white. And he looks more like an accountant than a school reformer (although many school reformers these days have MBAs). The news that his charter school kids—98 percent black and 98 percent poor—had gotten top honors in the city on the math and English language arts tests made the former legislative assistant positively ecstatic.

He opened his school in 2002 in a renovated public school building (for which BCCS won a preservation award) on the edge of Albany's tough Arbor Hill and West End neighborhoods. The public schools in that part of town were among the worst in the state—some said, in the nation. And while many people may have been surprised by Brighter Choice's quick success, Carroll isn't. "One thing that I think we've shown is that race and economics need not predict outcome," he says, matter-of-factly. "It often does in life, but it's because those children are often consigned to the crappiest schools and therefore they have the crappiest results. Which shouldn't shock anybody."

Carroll says that single-sex classes is just one of the secrets to BCCS's success. He makes no bones about the fact that he believes in "stealing good ideas" from others, including Amistad Academy, a celebrated charter school in Connecticut. "We think that, on the management side, if you have a highly focused, mission-driven organization, where you have discrete standards, high expectations, a data system that allows you to get constant feedback on how well individual standards are being taught in each of the major subjects, that allows you to take those regular people and turn them into unusually gifted performers."

Until this year, when Carroll opened a new all-boys school (an $8 million renovation of a former shirt factory), BCCS was a K-4 school with separate classes for girls and boys. "The first reason," says Carroll, "is to eliminate social distraction. In the elementary years it's mostly goofiness. And then, as early as 4th and 5th grades, you start getting the hormonal issues of attraction and sex and boys and girls being impressed with each other and so forth.

"The second element is that there are certain things that boys and girls won't do while the other gender is present in the classroom. So, if the girls are out of the classroom, it's much easier to get boys to recite poetry, for example.

"The next big thing is that boys and girls develop differently, which is masked if you run a coed school. Boys are slower to gain literacy skills and girls are slower to learn math skills. But what does it actually mean as a practical thing to the teacher? Well, no matter where you want to bring the kid at the end of the day, you have to start where they are. So, if you have a boys and girls English class, you have to drop that class initially down to the level of the boys, who have no idea what you're talking about. But when you do that, you're shortchanging the girls. They're already a half year, year, ahead of the boys. And in math class, where the boys are picking up quicker, you're disadvantaging the boys to dumb the class down to the girls. So, paradoxically, by separating the kids by gender, we've almost totally eliminated the gender gap in both subjects."

So determined to do the right thing was Carroll that he asked Cornelius Riordan to evaluate the school, from opening day in 2002. Riordan, who says he was given "complete independence," has just completed five years of data-gathering. Though his report is not due out until the end of 2008, Riordan says that the preliminary results confirm Carroll's approach. "Students attending Brighter Choice Charter School score far below average at the beginning of kindergarten, confirming their at-risk status," he says. "But by the end of third grade they are scoring above the national average in reading, math, and science." It is too early to know how big a role single-gender plays, says Riordan, but the results are nevertheless "quite remarkable. It's an enormous accomplishment."

In June 1996, the Supreme Court declared VMI's all-male admissions policy unconstitutional while noting the advantages of single-gender education. All the justices—from Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Antonin Scalia—agreed that single-sex education offers positive educational benefits.

The problem has gotten so far out of hand—schools have become, some argue, anti-boy—that *Time* put Von Drehle's report on the cover with the provocative headline, "The Myth About Boys." The writer paints a bleak picture of the state of boys in our current school system. He recounts meeting Christina Hoff Sommers, author of *The War Against Boys*. "She ticked through a familiar, but disturbing indictment," Von Drehle writes. "More boys than girls are in special education classes. More boys than girls are prescribed mood-managing drugs. This suggests to her (and others) that today's schools are built for girls, and boys are becoming misfits."

In *Same, Different, Equal*, Rosemary Salomone concludes, "The data demonstrate that the prevailing system of education (overwhelmingly mixed-sex) is failing boys as well as girls, if in different ways, regardless of resource allocations."

Back from the Brink

Initial efforts to revive single-gender public education were done in by "conventional values," buttressed by what was then a sturdy Title IX ethos. "During the early 1990s a number of school leaders tried to set up single-sex schools or single-sex classes," Riordan recalls. "That was happening in Detroit, in Ventura, California, in Rochester, and other places. In all of those cases—it was a sad story—they were driven out or shut down by principals and teachers and parents. The one in Detroit went to court, but for the most part they were shut down by political pressure and threats of legal action."

Both Riordan and Salomone say 1996 was a turning point in the single-gender school wars. In June of that year, the Supreme Court declared VMI's all-male admissions policy unconstitutional while noting the advantages of single-gender education. All the justices—from Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Antonin Scalia—agreed that single-sex education offers positive educational benefits. In writing the majority opinion, Justice Ginsburg, a long and tireless advocate for gender equality, noted that "single-sex education affords pedagogical benefits to at least some students" and concluded, "that reality is uncontested in this litigation."

A few weeks after the Supreme Court ruling, Community School District 4 in New York City announced the opening of The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) in East Harlem (see sidebar, page 16). While it was the VMI case that got most of the nation's attention by seeming to strike a final blow against single-gender schooling in the United States, TYWLS seems to have won the day. The girls' school now has two schools in Queens, and one each in the Bronx and Philadelphia.

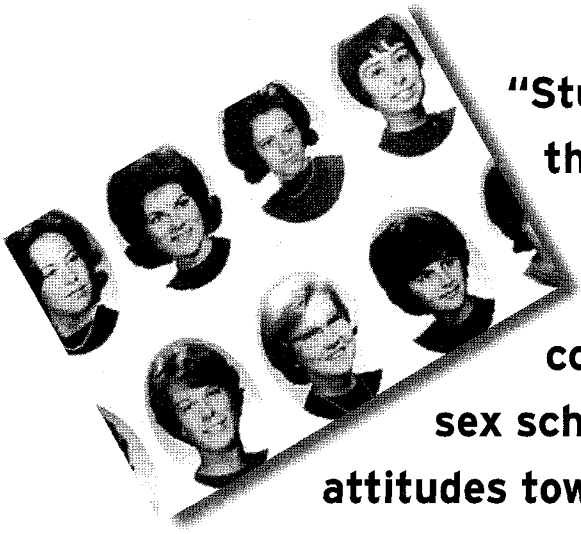
"Twenty years ago, all-girl schools seemed headed for extinction, a footnote in the story of American education," writes Ilana DeBare, author of *Where Girls Come First*, an account of public and private schools for girls going back into the 1800s. "Today they are experiencing an extraordinary renaissance. Between 1991 and 2001, more than 30 new girls' schools opened throughout the United States from Harlem to Silicon Valley, Atlanta to Seattle."

According to Leonard Sax, executive director of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education, in 1995 there were just 3 single-gender public schools in the United States; by 2007 there were 86, with an additional 277 public schools offering all-girls or all-boys education programs within their coeducational buildings.

This reversal of fortune has been spurred in part by "a growing body of research that single-gender, especially at the middle school level, works," says South Carolina Superintendent of Education Jim Rex, who campaigned on a platform that included making single-gender schools an option in every school district in the state.

Kathy Piechura-Couture, a professor at the Institute for Educational Reform at Stetson University in Deland, Florida, has studied children at the Woodward elementary school in Deland, which has had separate classes for boys and girls for three years. She concluded that boys and girls are different enough that they demand, or should be offered, separate schools. "We looked at gain scores and concluded that there is a significant difference for boys when put in separate classes," says Piechura-Couture. Over the years, she explains, other researchers have discovered a significant number of differences between boys and girls that affect their learning abilities at any given time. "Girls have better hearing than boys, for instance," she says. "So, if you have a room full of girls you don't have to yell."

A research review undertaken by the American Institutes for Research in 2005 culled the most reliable studies from a decade of research on single-sex education. Most of the research had been done on Catholic schools and more on girls' schools than on schools for boys. The review found that roughly one-third of studies favored single-sex schools on measures of short-term academic accomplishment. The researchers characterized most of the remainder as finding no difference or having null findings. They found little support, however, for coeducational schooling being more effective. This, argue proponents of single-sex schools, suggests that parents should at least be given a choice.



"Study after study has demonstrated that girls and boys in single-sex schools are academically more successful and ambitious than their coeducational counterparts. Minority students in single-sex schools often show dramatic improvements in attitudes toward school."

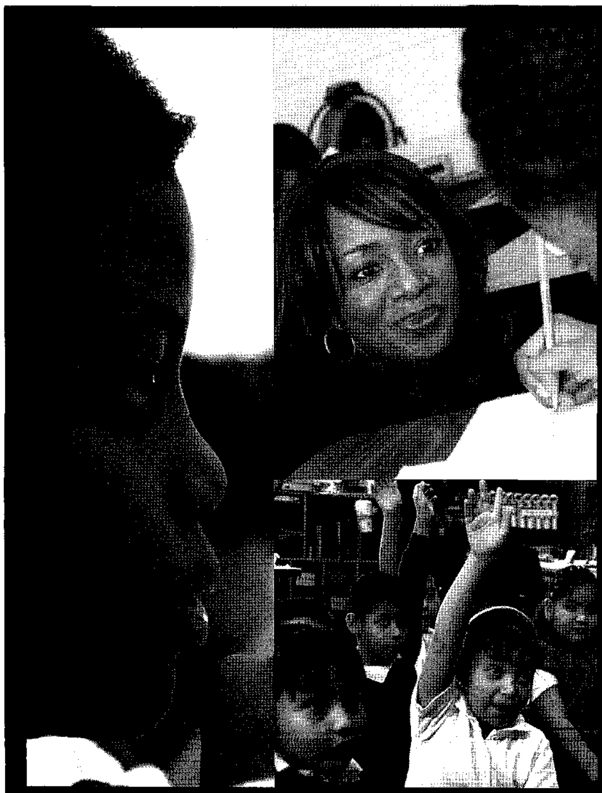
More Is Equal

The resurgence of single-sex schooling has also been the result of hard-fought battles to recapture the benefits of difference and take advantage of educational choice. The rewriting of Title IX addressed confusion created by the restrictions in the original 1972 statute and the support for single-sex education in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Among proponents of the changes were Senators Hillary Clinton, Kay Bailey Hutchison, and Dianne Feinstein—women who have arrived, both Clinton and Feinstein via single-sex schools. Senator Hutchison, a product of coed schooling, in a 2001 *American University Law Review* article wrote, "Talk to students and graduates of single-sex schools (mostly private or parochial), and almost all will say with gusto that they were enriched and strengthened by their experience.... Study after study has demonstrated that girls and boys in single-sex schools are academically more successful and ambitious than their coeducational counterparts. Minority students in single-sex schools often show dramatic improvements in attitudes toward school, greater interest among girls in math and science, and dramatically fewer behavior problems."

It is true, as Salomone says, that sometimes "same is equal," other times "different is equal," and still other times, "more is equal." Part of what single-sex schools do is redress historic and historical inequities; another part is minimizing the distractions that come from mixing the sexes; and a final ingredient is addressing gender differences in learning. James Coleman, who died in 1995, probably would have appreciated the cultural shifts that have made the single-sex school take on new meaning, since he was one of the first modern academics to propose that coed schools offered a false promise of equality. As those who have studied the racial educational gaps in our public elementary and secondary schools have noticed, throwing children together does not solve the problems of dominance; it can, in fact, exacerbate them. The two notions of peer effects—race and gender—have been joined as more and more attention is being paid to "black boys" and schools that cater to them. That is surely what Tom Carroll, chairman of the Brighter Choice Charter Schools in Albany, New York, has proved (see sidebar, page 18). Increasingly, the single-sex school movement is seen, as Martin Luther King III told an Albany audience celebrating Brighter Choice, as a means of "liberation—liberation from prejudice, liberation from socially imposed limitations, and liberation of the dignity, capabilities, and potential for excellence that dwells in the heart of every human being." Choice is opportunity. The choice of single-sex education is affirmative action for the sexes.

In a front-page story, the *New York Times* called the 2006 amendments to Title IX "the most significant policy change on the issue" in more than 30 years. The decision, of course, came with what Martin Davis of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute characterized as "a flood of criticisms from women's groups and some civil rights organizations." But the dire predictions about the resegregation of public schools and turning back the clock on civil rights gains for women never materialized. And while various groups threatened legal actions, none have materialized. It is a new world, especially for women, and serious educators seem to realize that single-sex schools and classrooms are not a threat, but another arrow in the quiver of education quality.

Peter Meyer, former news editor of Life *magazine, is a freelance writer and contributing editor of* Education Next.



LEAD. INSPIRE. TRANSFORM.

ENSURE HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR *EVERY* STUDENT:
BECOME AN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL.

New Leaders *for* New Schools

Pursue a unique pathway to the principalship.
Our comprehensive program offers:

Administrative certification
Rigorous coursework by national experts
Year-long, paid residency in an urban public school
Coaching and mentoring from successful principals
Ongoing support once in the role as principal
A national community of like-minded peers

APPLY ONLINE. OUR FINAL DEADLINE IS:
FEBRUARY 28, 2008

For more information or to nominate a great candidate, visit us online at www.nlns.org.

BALTIMORE * CALIFORNIA'S BAY AREA * CHICAGO * MEMPHIS * MILWAUKEE
NEW ORLEANS * NEW YORK CITY * PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY * WASHINGTON, D.C.

feature

Peaks, Cliffs, & Valleys

The peculiar incentives of teacher pensions

Ms. Baker is a hypothetical Ohio school teacher, age 49 with 24 years of service. She's had a good run, but is ready for a change; her heart's not in it anymore, and she wants to go out on a high note. But she has a dilemma regarding her pension. She and her school district have contributed $422,000 to Ohio's pension trust fund (with interest), yet her pension is worth only $315,000. If she hangs on for another six years, the pension picture changes dramatically: her pension will be worth close to $1 million, hundreds of thousands of dollars *more* than the contributions.

Ms. Brooks has the opposite dilemma. She's been teaching in Arkansas since age 25, and at age 53, in light of her exemplary career and continuing enthusiasm, she's just been chosen to be a mentor teacher. The problem is her pension. Every year of additional service *reduces* her pension wealth, despite the fact that she and her district continue to contribute 20 percent of her pay into the fund.

Welcome to the world of teacher pensions.

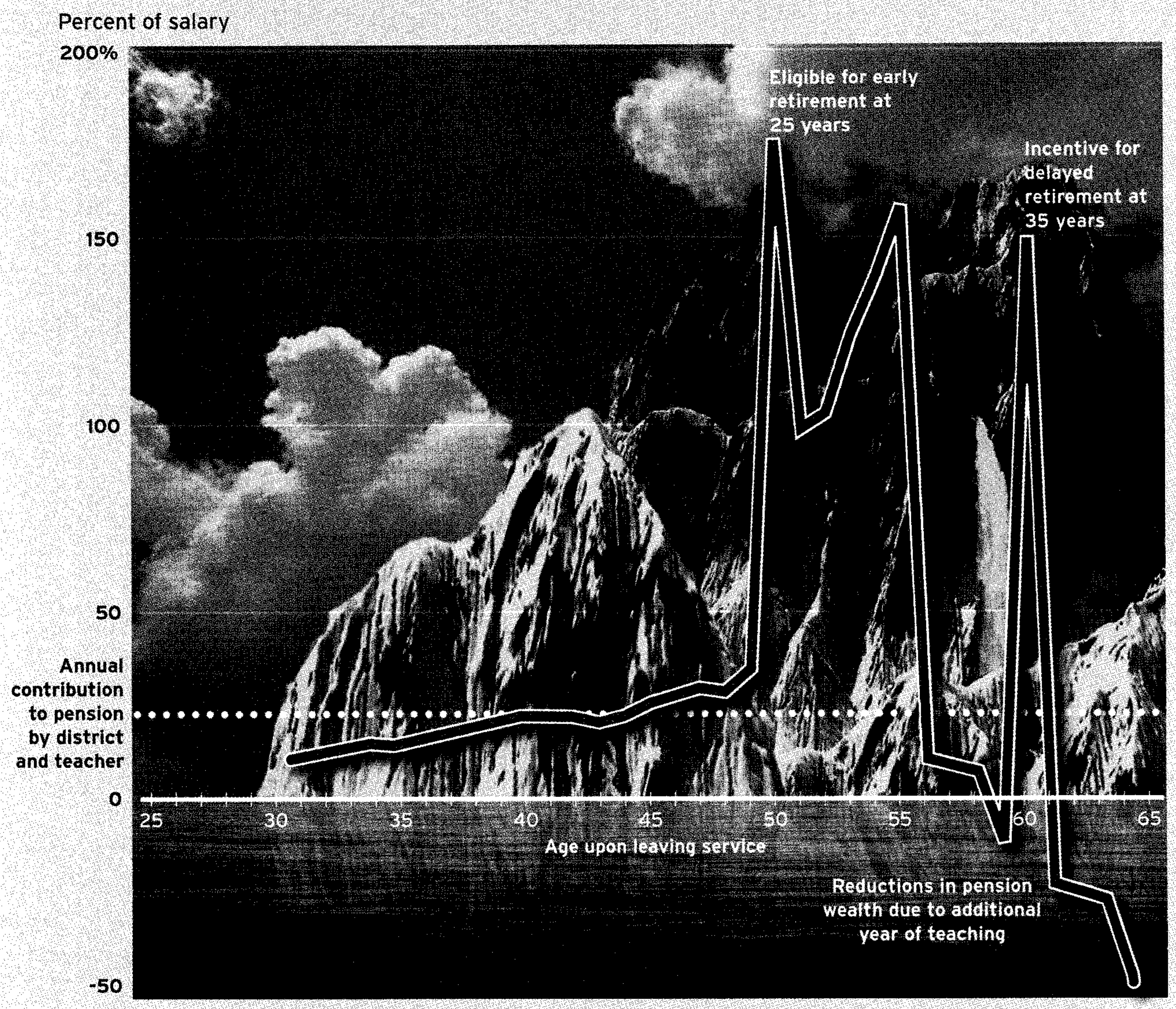
Pensions have long been an important part of compensation for teachers in public schools. However, the incentive structures of teacher pension systems are not widely understood, even though they can have powerful effects on the composition of our teaching force and on public finance.

In our research, we have found that teacher pension systems have two strong incentives—a pull and a push. Teachers typically earn relatively little in the way of pension benefits until they reach their early fifties, when much larger benefits start to accrue. The system therefore pulls teachers to "put in their time" until then, whether or not they are well suited to the profession. Beyond that point, the pension system quickly begins to punish teachers for staying on the job too long, pushing them out the door at a relatively young age, often in their mid-fifties, even if they are still effective teachers. These

BY ROBERT M. COSTRELL AND MICHAEL PODGURSKY

Increase in Pension Wealth from an Additional Year of Teaching (Various States)

Figure 2a Ohio



Note: Addition to pension wealth is net of interest on prior wealth. Age of entry into teaching is 25. Age of first pension draw for separation at first major spike is 55 (OH), 50 (AR), 53 (MO), 56 (CA) and 55 (MA). Calculations use salary grid for each state's capital city. Pension COLAs are state-specific. Other assumptions as in Figure 1.

Figure 2b Arkansas

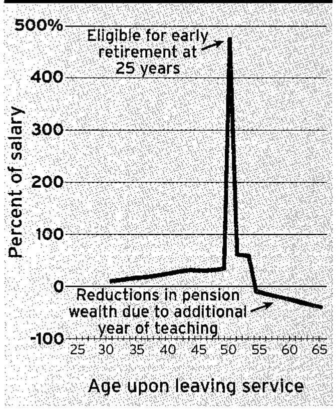


Figure 2c Missouri

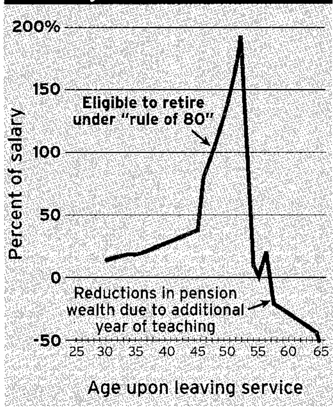


Figure 2d California

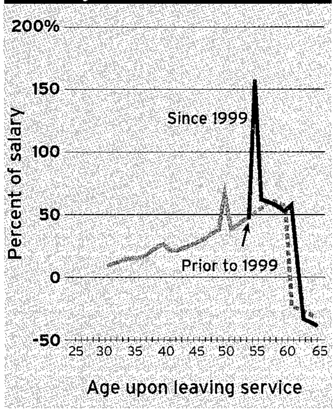


Figure 2e Massachusetts

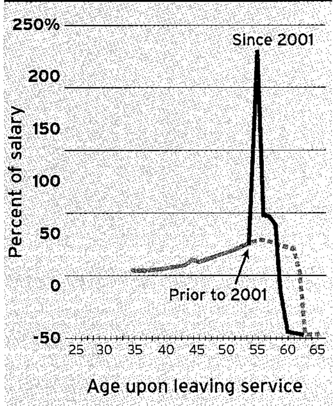


ILLUSTRATION / BRUCE SANDERS DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION

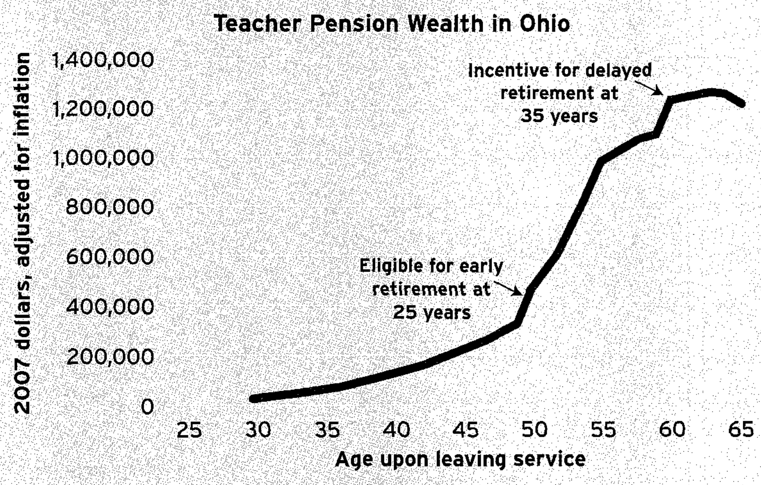
"pull-push" incentives are embedded in the patterns of pension wealth accumulation over teachers' careers, patterns that feature dramatic peaks, cliffs, and valleys that can greatly distort work decisions for no compelling public-policy purpose.

Teacher pension systems can also have important implications for recruitment. Pension benefits may seem distant and uncertain for prospective young teachers, who often change jobs. The costs, however, are incurred from the start in contributions from employer and employee that can exceed 20 percent of the teacher's pay. Many young teachers, who are paying off student loans, starting families, and buying homes, might prefer more of their compensation paid up front rather than diverted into a system from which they may well never benefit.

Finally, the teacher retirement benefit system has major effects on K–12 school finance. Teachers who retire in their mid-fifties are likely to draw pension benefits for at least as many years as they taught. This can be expensive. A teacher retiring at age 55 with a $50,000 inflation-indexed annual pension has received an annuity valued at over $1 million. Retiree health insurance can add much more to the bill. To fund these benefits requires large contributions from employees and employers. In Ohio, for example, contributions currently stand at 24 percent of salary (10 percent from the teacher and 14 percent from the district). But even this falls well short of what is needed and pension officials are recommending an increase to 29 percent, to shore up funding for pensions and retiree health benefits.

Scramble to Retirement (Figure 1)

An Ohio teacher who begins work at age 25 would, after 24 years, have a pension worth $315,000, but over the next six years it would grow to a total value of $971,000.



Note: Age at entry into teaching is 25. Age of first pension draw is 60, until 25th year of service, when it drops to 55. Calculations use the 2006-07 Columbus, Ohio, salary grid and the unisex 2003 mortality table from IRS Revenue Ruling 2002-62 Appendix B. All cells in the salary grid are assumed to grow at 2.5% inflation, the pension cost of living adjustment (COLA) equals 3% (uncompounded), and the interest rate equals 5%.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations

There is a surprising disconnect between discussions of state teacher pension systems and the larger discussion of retiree benefits in an era of longer life spans and the impending bulge of baby-boom retirees. The retirement age for Social Security is being raised, but there is little discussion of the incentives to retire early from teaching. Just as the benefit overhang of GM, Chrysler, and Ford finally forced changes in their plans, the growing share of K–12 spending consumed by these retirement benefit systems may force similar changes.

As teacher retiree benefit costs spiral upward, it is important to begin asking what effect these systems have on recruitment and retention. In this article, we analyze the incentives embedded in teacher pension systems by examining the pattern of pension wealth accumulation over a teacher's career.

Pension Plan Basics

Public school teachers are almost universally covered by traditional defined benefit (DB) pension systems. The employer has an obligation to provide a regular retirement check to employees upon their retirement, based on a legislatively determined formula (see sidebar). The key characteristic of DB systems is that the benefit is not tied to the contributions that individual teachers and employers make to the pension fund. That is what distinguishes DB from defined contribution (DC) plans, known more popularly as 401(k)-type systems.

DB plans were once the norm in both the public and private sectors. In recent decades, private sector employers have shifted in large numbers to DC systems (or closely related systems known as cash balance, discussed below). In DC systems, the employer contributes annually to a retirement account for an employee, and the employee contributes as well. For example, a common arrangement in the private sector is for the employer to match employee contributions up to a certain percentage of the employee's salary. If the employee quits, he takes the retirement funds with him. The employer is under no obligation to provide a given payment to the employee at the time of retirement. The employee, however, can always choose at retirement to convert the accumulated funds into a stream of payments for life by buying an annuity.

Conversely, when a teacher retires under a DB plan, she is entitled to a stream of payments that has a lump-sum value (or present value) that can be readily determined using standard actuarial methods. In principle, this pension wealth represents the market value of the associated annuity: it is the size of the 401(k) that would be required to generate the same stream of payments.

Typically, a DB teacher pension plan requires that both teachers and employers make a contribution each year to a pension trust fund, much as in DC plans, but the funding characteristics are very different. Under DC plans, the pension benefits are always fully funded, since the benefit is generated directly by the contributions. Under DB plans, individual benefits are not tied to contributions, so the pension fund as a whole is supposed to accumulate enough money to pay for the accrued liabilities. But this is rarely the case. Many teacher pension systems have large unfunded liabilities (e.g., California $19.6 billion, Missouri $5.2b, Ohio $19.4b, Oklahoma $7.7b, New Jersey $10.0b, all in 2006). Matters are made worse by legislatures that juice up the benefit formula when the stock market is up and the value of pension funds is high, only to find the systems saddled with even larger unfunded liabilities when the market turns sour. And as large as these liabilities are, they do not include future costs for retiree health insurance, an issue that is now beginning to appear on education-finance radar screens.

How Teacher Pensions Work

Once a teacher is vested in a defined benefit system (has worked and contributed for usually five or ten years), she becomes eligible to receive a full pension upon reaching a certain age and/or length of service. Eligibility rules typically allow a teacher to draw a full pension well before age 65, especially if she has been teaching since her midtwenties. Benefits at retirement are usually determined by a formula such as the following:

Annual Benefit = (years of service) x (*r*) x (final average salary).

Typically, the final average salary is calculated over the last three years, and *r* is a percentage that we will call the "replacement factor." In Missouri, teachers earn 2.5 percent for each of the first 30 years of teaching service. For example, Ms. Howard, a Missouri teacher with 30 years' service, would earn 75 percent of the final average salary. So if the final average salary were $60,000, she would receive:

Annual Benefit = 30 x .025 x $60,000 = $45,000, payable for life.

For teachers who separate from service prior to being eligible to receive the pension, the first draw is deferred and the amount of the pension is frozen until that time. Once the pension draw begins, there is typically some form of inflation adjustment.

The decision to teach or to retire at any given age can have profound financial consequences for the individual teacher.

Incentives to Teach or Retire

The decision to teach or to retire at any given age can have profound financial consequences for the individual teacher. Small, and arbitrary, differences in the timing of retirement can be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Teachers cannot afford to be indifferent to these consequences, and many of them surely respond to the incentives embedded in the system. To appreciate these incentives, it is necessary to understand the pattern of a teacher's pension wealth accumulation over the course of her career.

Figure 1 depicts the pension wealth, in inflation-adjusted dollars, at various ages of separation for a 25-year-old entrant to the Ohio teaching force, the profile of our hypothetical Ms. Baker. Clearly, the accumulation of pension wealth is not smooth and steady, but rises with fits and starts after age 50, due to rules of eligibility for early retirement and the like. During her first 24 years in the classroom, she accumulates $315,000 in pension wealth. However, over the next six years she accumulates more than $100,000 *per year* and crosses the million-dollar mark at age 56. Pension wealth reaches a peak by her early sixties and then starts to decline.

In this system, those teachers who retire after 25 years or more (age 50 in our example) receive more in benefits than has been contributed to the system on their behalf, while those who leave teaching earlier do not. The inequities here can be quite substantial. If Ms. Baker retires at age 56, her million dollars of pension wealth exceeds the cumulative contributions (with interest) of herself and of her employer by over $370,000; if she leaves at age 49, she will receive benefits worth $100,000 *less* than the contributions.

The next set of figures answers the question that is critical for understanding the system's incentives: how much does a teacher's pension wealth change if she works an additional year? This is a measure of *deferred* income received from employment. If, for example, a year of work raises a teacher's pension wealth by $50,000 (net of interest on the prior year's pension wealth), it is as if she had a 401(k) account that received $50,000 in contributions that year. Figures 2a through 2e illustrate graphically the peaks, cliffs, and valleys in pension wealth accrual from each additional year of work over the course of a teacher's career in five state systems.

The primary drivers of pension wealth accrual are changes in the annual annuity payment (determined by the benefit formula) and the number of years the teacher can expect to collect. The latter is often the wild card.

Consider Ohio, depicted in Figure 2a (which is derived from Figure 1). A teacher who enters service at age 25 (such as Ms. Baker) accrues pension wealth during her early years on the job starting at roughly 10 percent of annual earnings and gradually rising to 34 percent in her 24th year (age 49). Her 25th year of experience yields quite a bonanza: her pension wealth jumps by about 176 percent of her annual earnings. Each of the next five years also yields deferred income that equals or exceeds her current income. Pension wealth accrual drops off dramatically over the years following, with another sharp spike at age 60 (35 years' experience). Beyond age 60, while both she and her employer are continuing to make large contributions to the retirement fund, Ms. Baker's pension wealth actually shrinks, and at an accelerating rate.

All five states display sharp pension spikes. In Arkansas, a particularly sharp spike occurs at age 50 (see Figure 2b). In that year, a teacher's pension wealth increases by almost five times her salary. For a teacher with a $50,000 salary, it is as if she received a $250,000 contribution to her 401(k) account. Her pension wealth accrual drops off precipitously the next year, and turns negative by age 54, creating the dilemma of our would-be mentor teacher Ms. Brooks. Similarly, teachers in Missouri, California, and Massachusetts experience pension spikes in their early to mid-fifties, followed by much slower growth and ultimately shrinking pension wealth at various ages (see Figures 2c–2e).

The dotted lines on Figures 2d and 2e indicate the pattern of accrual prior to benefit enhancements enacted by the legislatures in California and Massachusetts. These legislated changes created spikes where none existed. In Arkansas, benefit enhancements over the years have shifted the spike to the left, to earlier retirement. Ohio's multiple-spiked system also reflects its history of benefit enhancements; it used to have a single spike at age 60.

What Causes Pension Peaks, Cliffs, and Valleys?

What features of the benefit formula give rise to such sharp spikes in pension wealth accrual? One might expect that the growth in pension wealth would be fairly steady, as it is in a DC plan. After all, both the teacher and employer are making the same contributions year after year. But in a DB plan, pension wealth is not tied to contributions. The primary drivers of pension wealth accrual are changes in the annual annuity payment (determined by the benefit formula) and the number of years the teacher can expect to collect. It is the latter that is often the wild card in these systems.

Spikes in several of these states occur because teachers can start collecting their pension at an earlier age once they have worked a certain number of years. For example, during the first 24 years of teaching (to age 49), Ohio's Ms. Baker had to wait until age 60 to collect her pension. However, her 25th year of teaching (at age 50) allows her to begin collecting pension checks five years earlier, producing a sharp spike in wealth accrual.

Another example is Missouri's "rule of eighty," under which a teacher is eligible to receive a full pension once the sum of age and service equals eighty, rather than the normal retirement age of 60. When our 25-year-old entrant passes age 45, each successive year of service allows her to start receiving her pension one year earlier, resulting in rapid growth in pension wealth for several years (see Figure 2c).

Once a teacher gets past the spike (or spikes), pension wealth accrual turns negative. This is not because her monthly pension check shrinks. In fact, it is growing. Rather, pension wealth falls because once she is at an age to begin collecting without deferral, each year of work requires her to forgo a year of pension, which is never recouped. The monthly payment is not enhanced sufficiently to offset this loss.

At this point in her career, the pension system serves as a twofold tax on earnings, first by the required employee contribution and second by the negative deferred income. Together, these can easily offset much or even all of her salary, in which case her total compensation is little or nothing. If the reduction in pension wealth from working an additional year exceeds the teacher's take-home pay, her total compensation is negative and she is paying for the privilege of teaching.

Do Teachers Respond to Pension Incentives?

The peaks and valleys of pension wealth accrual create large pull-push incentives. Teachers are pulled to stay on the job until they reap the benefit of the spikes: a few more years of "putting in time" can mean a difference of several hundred thousand dollars. Once a teacher is beyond the spike and pension wealth starts shrinking, the system is effectively pushing her into retirement.

There is ample evidence that such incentives affect behavior. Anecdotal evidence is commonplace of teachers (and others) timing their retirement decisions to the parameters of the benefit formula; pension systems routinely provide online pension calculators to help their members do so. Labor economists have developed more systematic statistical evidence on the incentive effects of retirement benefit systems, particularly those in the Social Security system. There has been much less research specifically on teacher pensions, but that which is available indicates strong incentive effects. In Missouri, for example, teacher labor-force data show that retirement rates spike when the sum of age and experience is around 80—consistent with the incentives embedded in that state's "rule of eighty" eligibility formula.

Unintended Consequences: Employment after "Retirement"

Teacher pension systems typically have strong incentives for early retirement built in. Given concerns about teacher shortages and pressures from the No Child Left Behind Act to staff classrooms with qualified teachers, it makes little sense for districts to nudge experienced, credentialed, and effective teachers out the door at such early ages. Not surprisingly, all of these teacher pension systems have provisions that allow educators to continue to teach and collect their pension in certain circumstances (a practice called "double dipping"). These provisions seem to be expanding. Here are examples.

1. Part-time employment. All of the pension systems considered here allow retired teachers who are receiving pension payments to continue to work in covered employment on a part-time basis (without accruing additional benefits).
2. Employment in shortage areas. Many states permit retired educators to teach full time for a specified period of time in "shortage" fields.
3. Break in employment. Some states allow teachers to return to full-time employment and collect their pension after a specified break in service. In California the required break is 12 months. In Ohio, a retired teacher can return to work the next day, but must wait two months before receiving pension benefits.
4. DROP plans. Many states have implemented Deferred Retirement Option Plans (DROPs). These permit teachers to continue working full time for a specified period of time (up to ten years in Arkansas), during which all or most of their pension check goes into what amounts to an individual retirement account.

Of course, retired educators can resume teaching by crossing a state line or a district boundary to work in a different pension system. For example, Missouri teachers in the state pension system can retire and work full time in the St. Louis or Kansas City systems, or they can cross the border and work in Kansas.

The result of all of these postretirement options is that the decision to "retire" (i.e., collect a retirement check) is not necessarily the same as a decision to quit teaching. Unfortunately, we are aware of no comprehensive national data on this topic. Limited data from a national survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education suggest that at least 5 percent of the public school teaching workforce is also collecting a teacher pension. A longitudinal study of Missouri teachers found that 12 percent of teachers worked at least one year part time or full time following retirement.

Reemployment provisions such as these are not found in the private sector, where early retirement incentives are usually part of a downsizing effort. In teaching, by contrast, early retirement incentives have a completely different origin, namely legislatively enacted benefit enhancements, typically under heavy union lobbying. Reemployment provisions are often a delayed response to the unintended (if often predictable) problems created by these incentives. In other words, these provisions are ad hoc fixes to enhanced pension spikes.

Postretirement employment blurs the distinction between current and deferred compensation. At the very least, this calls into question the meaning of published data on teacher compensation. In addition, as reemployment becomes easier, the incentive to "retire" at or near a pension spike becomes more pronounced, as there is no downside if employment can

Given concerns about teacher shortages and pressures to staff classrooms with qualified teachers, it makes little sense for districts to nudge experienced, credentialed, and effective teachers out the door at an early age.

Under new government accounting rules, benefit plans and employers will need to provide annual estimates of health insurance liabilities in their financial statements. First hints at the figures are staggering.

continue. It might also be in the district's interest, if the pension costs are borne by the state. One might expect, therefore, that "retirements" would become even further concentrated at the spikes.

More Unintended Consequences: Health Insurance

Another consequence of early teacher retirement is a linked demand for retiree health insurance coverage. Since regular Medicare eligibility does not begin until age 65, teachers who retire in their fifties have a gap of many years in coverage. In light of this, many school districts and states have extended health insurance coverage to retirees. Unlike the teacher pension system, payments for retiree health insurance are typically pay-as-you-go (i.e., no employer fund is created to pay for these future liabilities). Under new government accounting rules (GASB 43 and 45), benefit plans and employers will need to begin providing annual estimates of these liabilities in their financial statements. First hints at the figures are staggering. Los Angeles Unified, which provides complete health insurance coverage for all retirees, has an estimated $5 billion unfunded liability. A recent report by the Cato Institute estimates that the unfunded liabilities of state and local governments under GASB 45 could total $1.5 trillion. These unfunded liabilities create pressures for higher contribution rates, local tax increases, and spending cuts in other areas.

Options for Reform

The underlying problem with DB systems is their distortion of retirement incentives, stemming from the broken link between benefits and contributions. DC systems and cash balance (CB) plans restore that link. Many large corporations have switched to DC and CB plans over the last 20 years. Some public entities, including a few teacher pension systems (Ohio's is one), have also started to offer DC or CB-type options in their plans.

CB plans are similar to DC plans in that both systems tie benefits closely to contributions. The main difference is that in a CB plan, the return is guaranteed by the employer (typically at a rate comparable to risk-free Treasury bonds), so the market risk is not borne by the employee. Often the debate over DB vs. DC plans focuses on the issue of risk, rather than the retirement incentives. Since our subject here is retirement incentives, we focus on CB plans, where the issue of market risk does not arise.

The neutrality of CB plans with regard to age of separation can be simply depicted. In the pension wealth accrual graphs, the lines would be horizontal at a percentage given by the sum of employee and employer contributions (see Figure 2a). The system does not drive teachers to stay to their midfifties and then leave. Pension wealth never declines: if a teacher wants to work another year, the account grows by the contributions, plus the investment return. This can then be converted to an annuity. If a teacher works another year, the starting annuity is increased in an actuarially fair manner, since there is one less year of retirement to cover.

Such a retirement-neutral plan leaves the employee much more latitude to decide when to retire or switch careers based on individual preferences (such as Ms. Baker). It also makes it easier for schools to retain effective teachers (such as Ms. Brooks), who might otherwise be driven by the pull-push incentives of pension spikes. This is preferable to the heavy-handed DB formulas, supplemented by makeshift DROP formulas or other reemployment provisions. Finally, it is fiscally more stable when benefits are tied closely to contributions. Unfunded liabilities do not arise so readily, and legislatures have less opportunity to enhance benefits by shifting costs to future generations of taxpayers and teachers.

Principles for Reform

The time is ripe to consider teacher pension reform, with an eye both to teacher quality and fiscal stability. A new or reworked retirement system should embody several key features:

Neutrality. Each additional year of work should increase pension wealth in a fairly uniform way. There should be no spikes or cliffs at any particular years of service. Longevity decisions by individuals and their employers should be based on personal priorities and education needs.

Transparency. The accrual of benefits should be simple and clear. There should be no opportunities for "gaming" the system.

Portability. The private sector has moved toward systems that do not penalize young professionals for changing jobs. Portability may also help attract to teaching an energetic, talented portion of the labor pool, as well as midcareer switchers, such as engineers and other technical workers, who could make valuable math and science teachers.

Sustainability. The pension system should be self-funding. Individual benefits should be tied to contributions made by and for the individual teacher.

DC and CB systems satisfy all these conditions far better than the traditional and outdated DB systems. To build and maintain a qualified teacher workforce in today's labor market, states should fundamentally reform their retirement benefit systems.

Robert M. Costrell is professor of education reform and economics at the University of Arkansas. Michael Podgursky is professor of economics at University of Missouri–Columbia.

ANNOUNCING FORDHAM SCHOLARS GRANTS

Advanced doctoral students and junior faculty members pursuing research related to **THE COURTS AND K-12 EDUCATION** are invited to apply for grants from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute to support their work for the 2008-2009 academic year. **SUCH GRANTS MAY RANGE FROM $15,000 TO $25,000.**

Individuals are encouraged to be creative in framing their proposed research topics, approaches, and methods. Successful projects will examine how the courts (state, federal, etc.) may be affecting the ability of educators, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to foster stronger pupil achievement; greater choices for families; more efficient school operations; promising innovations in curriculum, instruction, school organization and leadership; and sound, workable accountability mechanisms. Topics may include, but are in no way limited to, the following:

- Legal barriers to hiring effective school leaders and teachers (and letting go those who are ineffective)
- Litigation's effect on school discipline, staff morale and sound management
- Special education litigation (and costs)
- Constitutional and other litigation and its effects on the expansion and quality improvement of charter schools and other forms of school choice
- Torts litigation and its impact on physical education
- School finance litigation and its effect on sound budgetary practices

Scholars in economics, law, political science, and public policy are especially encouraged to apply.

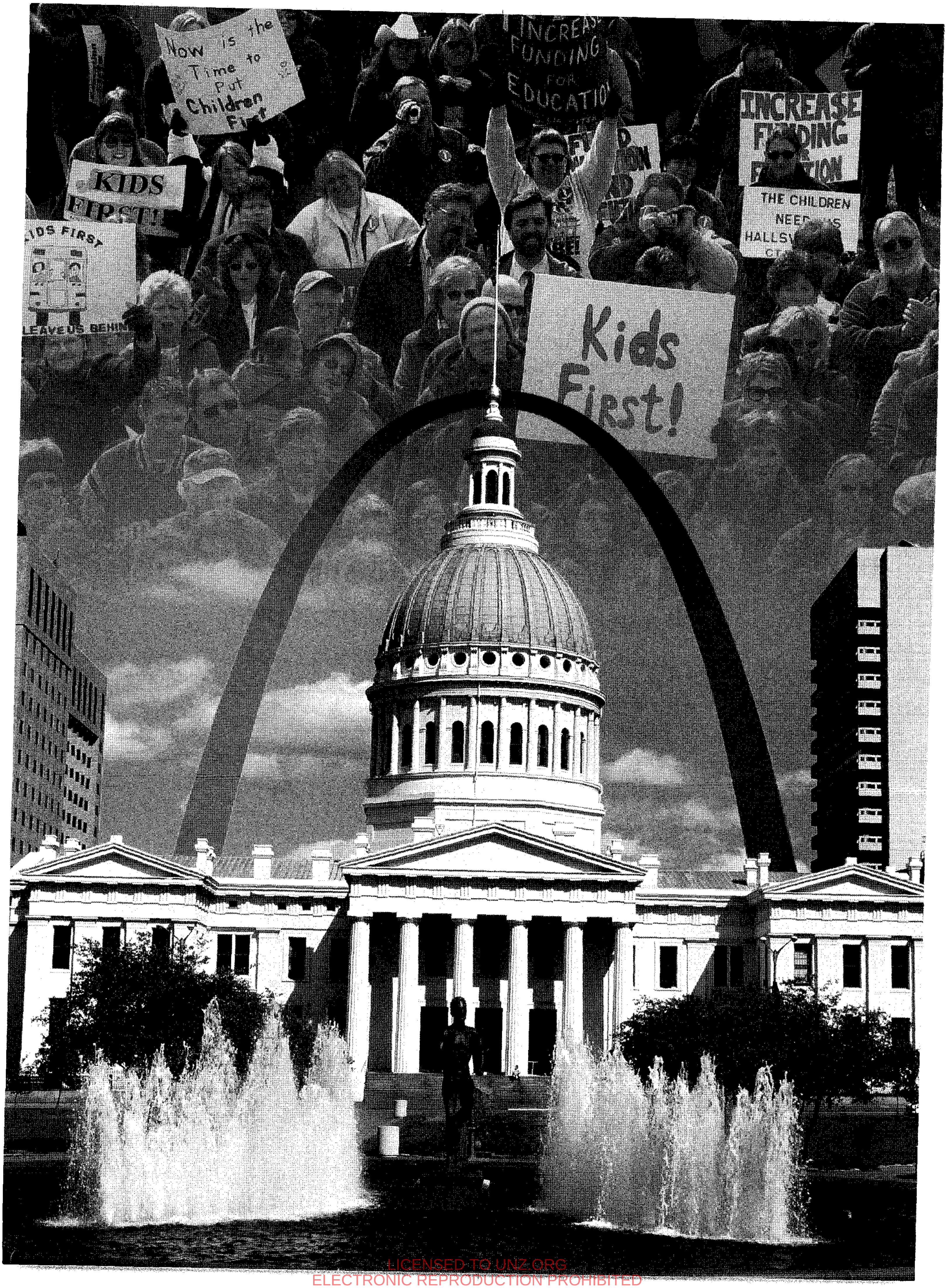
THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 15, 2008. Judges will base their decisions on the likelihood that a proposed project will make an important contribution to the nation's understanding of a significant issue. **AWARDS WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON APRIL 15, 2008.**

Those who are named as Fordham Scholars will be brought to Washington, D.C. in June 2008 and honored at a reception attended by leading education policy thinkers and government officials.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DOWNLOAD AN APPLICATION,
GO TO WWW.EDEXCELLENCE.NET/FOUNDATION/FORDHAMSCHOLARS

The awards are provided by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C. committed to ensuring that every child receives a world-class K-12 education. More information about the Fordham Institute is available at www.edexcellence.net/institute.

THOMAS B. FORDHAM
INSTITUTE


Now is the Time to Put Children First
INCREASE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION
KIDS FIRST!
KIDS FIRST
LEAVE US BEHIND
INCREASE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION
THE CHILDREN NEED US
HALLSV
Kids First!

feature

St. Louis Blues

Tax credits down and out in Missouri

Many school choice enthusiasts think school choice legislation can be passed if only a number of minority political leaders can be won to the cause. Polls show that African Americans are among the strongest supporters of vouchers, tax credits, and charter schools (see "What Americans Think about Their Schools," *features*, Fall 2007). If minority leaders can be weaned away from traditional alliances, the underlying public support will translate into effective legislative action, especially if choice laws focus on schools in urban areas.

All of that sounds convincing in theory, but the reality can be quite different. In state after state, when legislators introduce proposals aimed at moving students out of failing schools, activists emerge to delay, block, or sabotage the

BY WILBUR C. RICH

ILLUSTRATION / BRUCE SANDERS DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION; AP IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES

Tax Credit Landscape (Table 1)

Missouri's proposed plan looked much the same as education tax credit programs in other states.

	Missouri	Arizona	Florida	Pennsylvania
Year Program Founded	Proposed	1997	2001	2001
Eligible Donors	individuals and corporations	individuals and corporations	corporations	corporations
Donation Rules	credit equal to 65% of contribution	$500/individual $1,000/married couple; maximum corporate donation is equal to corporation's tax liability	maximum donation of 75% of tax liability, full donation credited	$200,000 maximum credit (companies credited for up to 90% of contribution)
Total Credits Available	$40 million	$10 million	$88 million	$75 million
Size of Scholarships	$5,000 average	$4,200 (K-8) $5,500 (9-12)	$3,750 for private school tuition $500 for transportation to public schools	no specific maximum
Applies to Public/ Private School Expenses	public and private	public and private	private and cost of transportation for attending out-of-district public schools	public and private
Geographic Focus	round 1: selected districts; round 2: urban only	statewide	statewide	statewide
Use of Scholarship Is Need-Based	yes	no	yes	yes

SOURCES: William Howell and Mindy Spencer, "A Survey of Tax Credit Programs," Pioneer Institute White Paper, August 2007; state education agency web sites for various programs

plans. The legislative history of the 2005 and 2006 tuition grant proposals in the Missouri House of Representatives offers some insights into how complex the political game can become, even when support from minority legislators is substantial.

The Missouri plan was designed to avoid the controversial label "school voucher." Rather than reallocating dollars slated for education, supporters proposed to give tax credits to individuals and businesses that donated money to nonprofit organizations providing low-income students with scholarship grants to attend private schools (see Table 1). Described this way, the legislation had the initial support of a broad coalition of Republicans and Democrats, blacks and whites. Not surprisingly, the teachers unions mounted a vigorous campaign against the bill. Under that pressure, the tuition grant coalition fell apart during the legislative process, revealing sharp divisions within the ranks of blacks and Republicans.

The Battleground

As elsewhere, school reform in Missouri takes place amid racially polarized municipal politics. School budget crises are continuous, teachers union leadership is combative, and minority community involvement is generally ineffective. Although the legislative maneuvering took place in Jefferson City, the state capital, the real audience for the tuition grant debate was the city of St. Louis.

The politics of the St. Louis schools is a black community affair. Many of the current school leaders were in the forefront of efforts to desegregate the schools beginning in the 1970s.

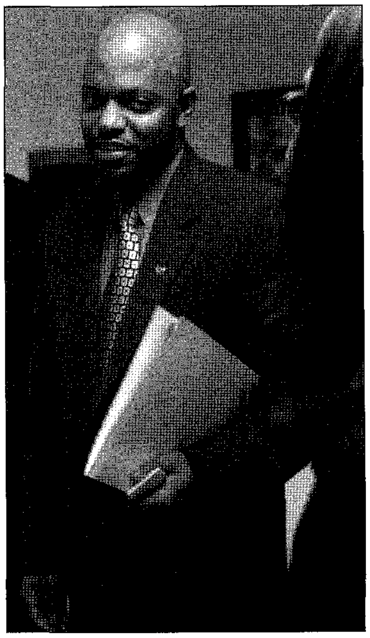
Jim Buford, president of the St. Louis Urban League and founder of the Black Leadership Roundtable, explained, "public schools are engrained into the fabric of the community." African Americans represent about half of the city's population, and 81 percent of the public school enrollment. About 80 percent of St. Louis students are in the free and reduced-price school lunch program. Unfortunately, the quality of the schools declined sharply after their peak 1983 AAA state rating; the dropout rate is high and student achievement low. By 2005, the district was only partially accredited, a serious situation with no clear solution at hand.

St. Louis has a strong public school cartel, an alliance of teachers union leaders, central board administrators, and various public-school interest groups that has an established routine for managing the schools and is typically skeptical of any proposal for change. The cartel acts as a veto player in school policymaking. Members are linked by churches, social organizations, and school ties, and these personal and political relationships drive the group's success. Political scientist Marion Orr refers to such connections as "bonds of personalism."

Republican Jane Cunningham chairs the House Education Committee.

The city's print media—including the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, which enjoys a national reputation—monitor the black leadership class and report on its interaction with the school system. St. Louis also has three African American weeklies that are widely read by both black opinion leaders and the public. Dr. Donald Suggs, a dentist and school supporter, owns the award-winning *St. Louis American*, which claims a readership of 90,000. His annual "Salute to Excellence" dinner attracts most of the players in school politics.

Given this rich tradition of an attentive and large black middle class, why has the St. Louis school district been so dysfunctional? St. Louis has a weak mayoral form of government. Although the mayor appoints directors of city departments, he shares budgetary powers with an elected comptroller and the Board of Aldermen. The mayor, comptroller, and president of the Board of Aldermen are members of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, which approves the city's annual operating budget, appropriations, and all city real-estate purchases. Hence the mayor must expend considerable energy and political capital to get other elected city officials to agree on policy. The elected school board is part of this fragmentation. Attempts to reform this Rube Goldberg system repeatedly failed.



Democrat Rodney Hubbard was part of the tuition-grant coalition.

Round 1: Learning the Ropes

In 2003, the St. Louis school district, designed for 80,000 students, enrolled only about 40,000. With fewer students, the district received less state aid, but since communities do not want to see their neighborhood schools shut down, the district had good political reasons to keep as many schools in operation as possible. That year, Mayor Francis Slay supported a winning slate of reform-minded candidates for the school board. Among them was Darnetta Clinkscale, a hospital administrator who had been active in the Black Leadership Roundtable. Later, Slay would appoint Jim Buford to fill a vacancy on the board. Facing an estimated $10 million deficit, the school board turned to the private sector for help. It hired the New York City consulting agency of Alvarez & Marsal, which specializes in turning around failing businesses, to get its fiscal house in order. The firm sent Bill Roberti, who became interim superintendent of the district. He quickly discovered that the deficit was actually $90 million.

To move the district toward financial stability, Roberti closed 16 schools and laid off 14,000 employees, 200 of whom were central office personnel, critical players in the school cartel. Roberti and his staff held no town meetings to explain the situation and took action without trying to console the school cartel or the public. In an interview, Buford suggested that they lacked "diplomacy."

St. Louis has a strong public school cartel, an alliance of teachers union leaders, central board administrators, and various public school interest groups.

The public school cartel was still reeling when in February 2005 state representatives Ted Hoskins and Rodney Hubbard, both Democrats, and Republican Jane Cunningham introduced a bill in the Missouri House of Representatives to

Because two leading black representatives introduced the bill, the immediate question was whether they had the support of the entire black caucus. They did not.

offer scholarships to public school students to attend parochial and private schools. Under the proposal, businesses and individuals could receive tax credits for donating money to nonprofit educational assistance organizations. These organizations could then make tuition grants ranging from $3,800 to $6,500 to eligible students. Public schools judged to be high performing would be eligible for money for textbooks, supplies, and transportation. Other funds would be available for after-school tutoring, GED programs, and apprenticeships. The proposal was named the Betty L. Thompson Scholarship Program after a well-known former black female legislator who had proposed a similar scheme in her final legislative session. The plan covered Kansas City, St. Louis, Wellston, and 13 other districts, several of them rural.

Representative Maida Coleman, and Mayor Francis Slay, both Democrats, were on opposite sides of the tax-credit fight.

The proposal came at a time when Republicans controlled the state legislature and the governor's office. The initial tuition grant coalition, dubbed the HHC after Hoskins, Hubbard, and Cunningham, was unique because it had a bipartisan face with support from both Republicans and some urban black Democrats. But among those in opposition were minority Democratic leaders, including key members of the Education Committee. To bypass the Education Committee, chaired by Cunningham, the coalition held hearings for the proposal in Hoskins's Special Committee on Urban Issues, the only House committee chaired by a Democrat.

The public school cartel was appropriately alarmed. At first glance, the pilot proposal seemed small and innocuous in light of the millions of dollars Missouri spends on K–12 education. But a close examination revealed that districts would lose the state aid tied to those students who received the scholarships and left the public schools. Opponents viewed the proposal as the proverbial camel (vouchers) trying to get his nose under the tent. For them, the entire state school funding formula was at stake.

Advocates and opponents quickly emerged. Disagreement within the black community became apparent. At first, the *St. Louis American* attempted to be even-handed about the proposal. On the paper's op-ed page, Jim Buford sought to reassure readers that the proposal had merit and could help the city reform its schools. Otto Fajen, the legislative director of the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA), presented the opposing view. He called the bill "tax credit vouchers" and warned that "voucher proponents seek to mislead legislators and the public regarding the true nature of this tax credit voucher by labeling it a scholarship charity."

The characterization of the tuition grant as a "voucher" posed a public relations challenge for the sponsors, immediately putting them on the defensive. A typical voucher plan redirects per-student funding from the public schools to private schools chosen by parents and students; opposition is often vehement and backed by teachers unions. During the committee hearing, Rep. Hoskins repeatedly corrected witnesses who referred to the "voucher" bill. Nevertheless, the word voucher, with all its privatization connotations, dominated the discourse.

The public school cartel strongly opposed House Bill 639, as did the MNEA, the Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA), and the AFL-CIO. Because two leading black representatives introduced the bill, the immediate question was whether they had the support of the entire black caucus, which included 17 state representatives and 3 state senators. They did not. Caucus member and Democrat from St. Louis Rep. Maria Chapelle-Nadal emerged as a leading opponent. She lobbied her colleagues to oppose the bill. Internecine conflicts are not uncommon in the caucus, but it was rare for members to openly campaign against a bill sponsored by a caucus member.

Opponents decided to "load up" the bill with what Jane Cunningham called "killer amendments," which threatened to increase the cost of the program from the estimated $40 million price tag of the tax credits to $226 million. One amendment stated that the bill could not reduce state funding for education.

Additional amendments required private school students to take the state's standardized tests and the state to fully fund its school aid formula before implementing the scholarship program. To stop each of the amendments HHC needed 82 votes out of a possible 163. They got only 73 votes against the three amendments. Of the 16 African Americans in the Missouri House of Representatives, 13 voted in support of the first amendment and 9 voted for each of the others. Rep. Hoskins and his colleagues decided not to bring the bill up for a vote on the floor.

Yet the tuition grant coalition still had hope. The HHC had moved House Bill 639 further than any previous proposal to set up tax credits for scholarship donations; no prior proposal had made it to a floor debate in either the House or Senate. Also, the HHC believed it had garnered 73 solid supporters based on the amendment votes and decided to regroup and focus on how to get the additional 9 votes necessary for passage.

Governor Matt Blunt announced his support of the tax-credit proposal.

Round 2:
Eliminating the Rural Districts

During the summer of 2005, the HHC met with Republican leaders in the Missouri House, business leaders, and Governor Matt Blunt. The governor announced during an August press conference his support of a renewed effort to pass the proposal. Reflecting on their experience during Round 1, the coalition decided rural areas liked their local schools too much to want to embrace the tax-credit idea. It would be better, they concluded, to focus on schools in the central cities, with their highly visible social problems.

The coalition decided rural areas liked their local schools too much to embrace the tax-credit idea. It would be better to focus on schools in the central cities.

Accordingly, Hoskins and Hubbard introduced House Bill 1479 with Cunningham to establish the Angell Scholarship Program and House Bill 1783 with Speaker Pro Tempore Carl Bearden (R–St. Charles) to establish the Missouri Student Success Scholarships Tax Credit Program. The two similar bills were merged in committee. Once again the proposal was named the Betty L. Thompson Scholarship Program, but this time they eliminated the rural districts in hopes of getting the additional nine votes, the strategy used by the successful charter school coalition, according to Rep. Hoskins. Coverage was narrowed to only three districts: St. Louis, Kansas City, and Wellston, potentially reaching about 8,000 poor and at-risk students in failing schools.

Nevertheless, opposition remained vigorous. Many on both sides turned up for the debate in the House Special Committee on Urban Issues. Among supporters were the speaker of the house, the lieutenant governor, and the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association. Even the mayor of St. Louis sent word of his support for the proposal, given his district's partial accreditation. Opponents included the St. Louis and Kansas City school districts, MSTA, MNEA, the AFL-CIO, the St. Louis Teachers Local 420, and a number of key Democratic state senators.

In an early round of verbal volleying, Rep. Hoskins declared, "The system has collapsed in the city of St. Louis, Kansas City and Wellston." Sen. Maida Coleman (D–St. Louis) countered, "St. Louis Public Schools does as good as it can with what it has been given to work with." Soon the rhetoric turned personal. Hubbard accused the bill's opponents of being insufficiently sympathetic to the plight of urban children. Mary Washington, head of Local 420, responded that Hubbard had run away from the St. Louis schools when as a student he used the voluntary desegregation program to transfer to the Mehlville school district. Another opponent accused the bill's supporters of being beholden to pro-voucher campaign donors.

AFT Local 420 mounted a full-blown campaign against the revised proposal, organizing a bus tour that traveled across the state. Campaign staff created cartoons and handed out leaflets to people on the street. Local 420 asked fellow unionists across the state to oppose the bill and lobbied rural school-board members to contact their state representatives. Rural board members and their superintendents became convinced their state aid and their traditions could be ground up by the gears of change.

Meanwhile, in the spring 2006 St. Louis school board campaign, the corporate community raised $500,000 to elect James Buford and reelect Darnetta Clinkscale. The AFT Local 420 acted as the vanguard for the opposition. Goaded by the laid-off school employees, anti-Roberti factions defeated Buford and Clinkscale, despite committing only $80,000 to the campaign. That upset victory was a watershed in the city's school-board election politics and emboldened AFT Local 420 as it prepared to fight the pending tuition grant bill.

On April 12, 2006, a group of 200 parents and children, organized by school choice advocate Donayle Whitmore-Smith and Bertha Gilkey Bonds of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, traveled to the state house to lobby representatives for the bill. Parents and students, chanting "choice, choice, choice," demanded to speak to their representatives. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that Hoskins had exhorted the group to "go to the eight or nine black representatives and kick their butts." According to Whitmore-Smith, "They did not want to separate into smaller groups. They wanted to stick together and go from office to office." Although the group had e-mailed members and sent out press releases, they were not welcome in some of the offices of black representatives. There were some heated exchanges. The capitol police intervened when the group tried to enter Rep. Connie Johnson's office.

Capitol police intervened when parents tried to see Representative Connie Johnson.

The next day the caucus had an emergency meeting. Hubbard heard "whispers about [the Caucus] kicking us out." Hoskins thought the meeting illegal because it violated caucus rules, which require 50 percent of members to sign a notice if the chair did not call the meeting. The caucus nonetheless voted 11–3 to remove Hoskins as chair. Vice Chairman Hubbard then resigned. The bill's sponsors continued to search in vain for the necessary votes to pass the program in the House.

After the 2006 defeat, a new lobbying effort was organized by All Children Matter (ACM). In late 2006, Hubbard and Hoskins adopted the tactics of their opponents, touring the state trying to sell the idea of school choice in rural communities. The plan backfired. When Republican leaders brought the proposal up again in March 2007, 35 Republicans voted against the bill; 26 of them were from rural districts.

Cartel Politics

Many factors contributed to the proponents' failure to pass tuition grant legislation, among them the inclusion of rural districts in the first version of the bill. The opponents' success in framing the debate and effective use of proven campaign tactics were decisive. Opponents of the bill understood that if they wanted to win the framing contest, they had to discredit both the message and the messengers. In public school debates, teachers often let union leaders serve as their surrogates and speak for them. Union leaders steered the debate away from the academic records of two big city school systems. They presented their own "5-Point Plan," which shifted blame for school failure away from classroom teachers and onto a lack of funding. The union leaders termed the tuition grant proposal a "voucher bill," and the president of AFT Local 420 questioned Rep. Hubbard's loyalty to the St. Louis schools. Another union strategy was to insinuate that there were sinister elements working behind the HHC and in so doing nurture the conspiracy theorists within the black community.

Ultimately, the political success of a coalition depends on the ability of members to convince nonmembers that their proposal would benefit their constituency without harming other groups. Any coalition that seeks to reduce or change the formula for state aid to schools will encounter formidable opposition, as some party is likely to lose more than it gains. As the tuition grant proposal was aimed primarily at improving education for poor black children, the black-led coalition could not avoid being accused of promoting urban black interests at the expense of rural and suburban areas. At the same time, disagreements within the black community on the merits of school choice became readily apparent.

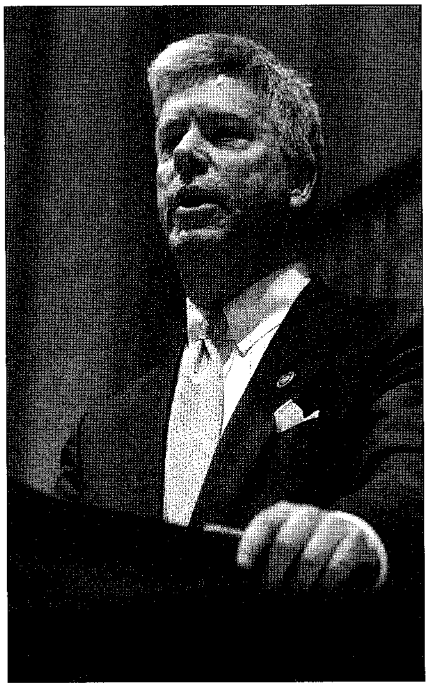
Opponents of the proposal invested considerable time and resources and even resorted to intimidating undecided school activists. Lieutenant Governor Peter Kinder remarked, "They can threaten local candidates. They demand blind adherence to their agenda. The slightest deviation will be punished. Any experimentation with new approaches will not be tolerated." WGNU radio talk show host Liz Brown railed against the idea of tuition grants and the Buford and Clinkscale appointments to the board. She urged her listeners to "throw the trash out."

The print media played a critical role in the debate. The *Post-Dispatch* sought to identify the political winners and losers, casting the story as a power struggle within the black leadership class. The subtext was the reputation, careers, and political power of city black elected officials. Hoskins claimed that the editorial section of the *St. Louis American*, called "The Political Eye," was "used to discredit us [black members of HHC]."

The dynamics of the state legislature also worked against the proposal. The ouster of Rep. Hoskins as chair of the caucus signaled to the Democratic Party and its supporters that caucus members were foursquare against school choice. The Progressive Caucus, made up of Representatives Hubbard, Hoskins, Maria Chapelle-Nadal, and Connie Johnson, has since split from the black caucus. Chapelle-Nadal and Johnson are not supporting school choice; defection is their response to the leadership of the black caucus. In the Missouri House of Representatives, Hoskins now chairs the Special Committee on Urban Education Reform.

While the confrontation between parents and legislators at the state house laid bare the split within the Missouri Legislative Black Caucus, it may have been the split in Republican ranks that doomed the bill. The tuition grant coalition began with black and white co-leadership, with Republican Jane Cunningham taking a more public role. As the process evolved, it became a black-led coalition. The decision to feature the two black legislators, Hubbard and Hoskins, was a political one. Republican state lawmakers could shield themselves from the controversy by taking a relatively passive stance. The Republicans apparently did not want to give the impression that they supported a change in the school funding formula. After Republican legislators began receiving letters from their constituencies, they abandoned the struggling HHC coalition altogether.

Throughout the campaign, the opposition effectively used the label "voucher bill" to win over rural superintendents and school boards. In a Show-Me Institute poll released in May 2007, 67 percent of Missouri voters and 77 percent of African Americans said they favored a law that would "give individuals and businesses a credit on either their property or state income taxes for contributions they make to education scholarships that help parents send their children to a school of their choice, including public, private, and religious schools." But only one-third of African Americans expressed support for "school vouchers."



Lieutenant Governor Peter Kinder accused tax-credit opponents of threatening activists.

Teachers unions had built an alliance with rural district leaders, which held even after the rural districts were dropped from the plan. These districts have few private schools, and their leaders feared the loss of state revenue for public education. Rural Republican representatives broke from their suburban counterparts, who tended to support the bill. An alliance of suburban Republicans and a handful of Democrats was not enough to pass the legislation.

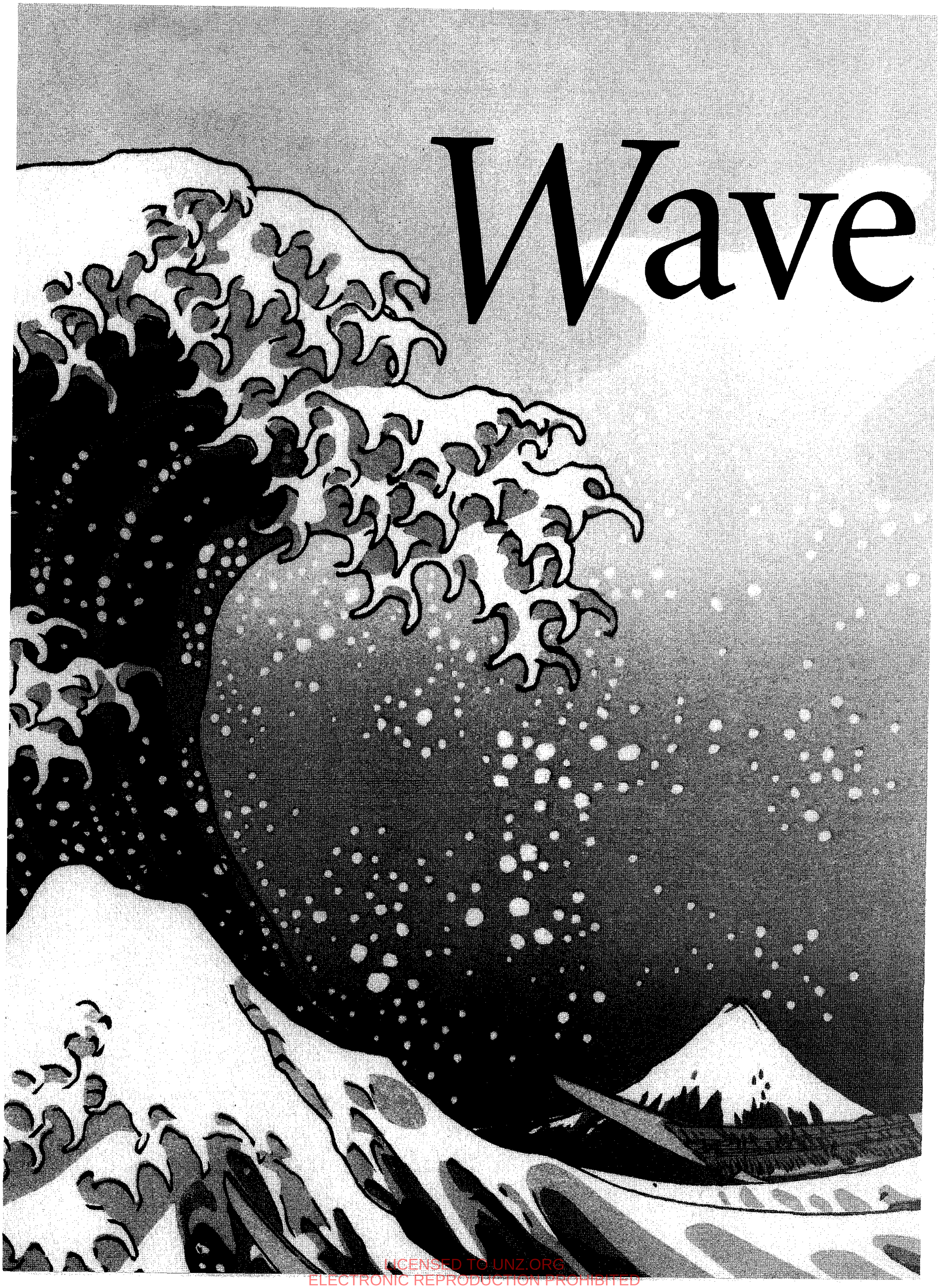
The sustained public attention to the schools did unleash unprecedented disequilibrium in St. Louis school politics. The inability of the system to improve its provisional state accreditation put the public school cartel's grip on the district in jeopardy. Continuing poor performance and general disarray in the system enabled Mayor Slay to form an alliance with the governor to take over the schools. Even the teachers unions were unable to block state intervention. In March 2007, the state board of education voted 5–1 to revoke the accreditation of the St. Louis public school district altogether and turn district operations over to a transitional board, initially consisting of three members appointed by the governor, the mayor, and president of the Board of Alderman. Eventually, the city will be able to elect members. Governor Matt Blunt nominated Rick Sullivan, a businessman, as CEO of the St. Louis schools effective in June 2007. Time will tell what role the existing superintendent and elected board members will play in the new arrangement.

Ultimately, the political success of a coalition depends on the ability of members to convince nonmembers that their proposal would benefit their constituency without harming other groups.

Regrettably, the casualties in these ongoing battles are the students. More often than not, the public school cartel can muster sufficient defenses to quell any threat to the status quo. But even with new district leadership in St. Louis, it is unlikely that students will see much change in the quality of instruction as the public school cartel gears up for its next political battle over who gets what, when, and how.

Wilbur C. Rich is professor of political science at Wellesley College. His latest book is David Dinkins and New York City Politics: Race, Images, and the Media.

Wave



# of the FUTURE

Why charter schools should replace failing urban schools

BY ANDY SMARICK

In a decade and a half, the charter school movement has gone from a glimmer in the eyes of a few Minnesota reformers to a maturing sector of America's public education system. Now, like all 15-year-olds, chartering must find its own place in the world.

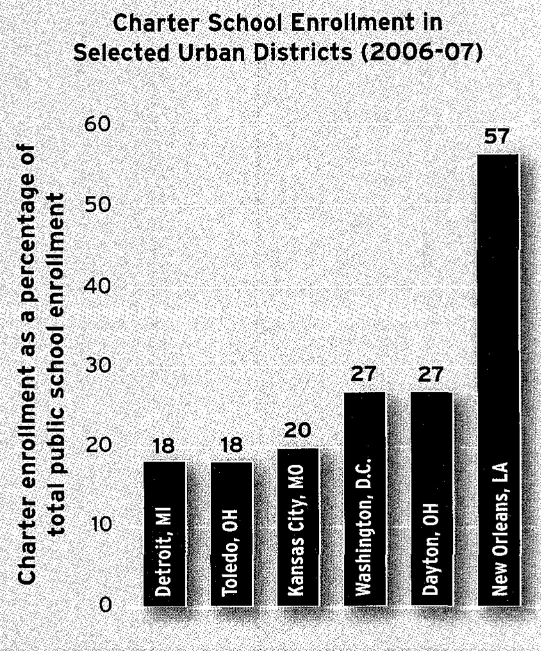
First, advocates must answer a fundamental question: What type of relationship should the nascent charter sector have with the long-dominant district sector? The tension between the two is at the heart of every political, policy, and philosophical tangle faced by the charter movement.

But charter supporters lack a consistent vision. This motley crew includes civil rights activists, free market economists, career public-school educators, and voucher proponents. They have varied aspirations for the movement and feelings toward the traditional system. Such differences are part of the movement's DNA: a National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) study found that the nation's charter laws cite at least 18 different goals, including spurring competition, increasing professional opportunities for teachers, and encouraging greater use of technology.

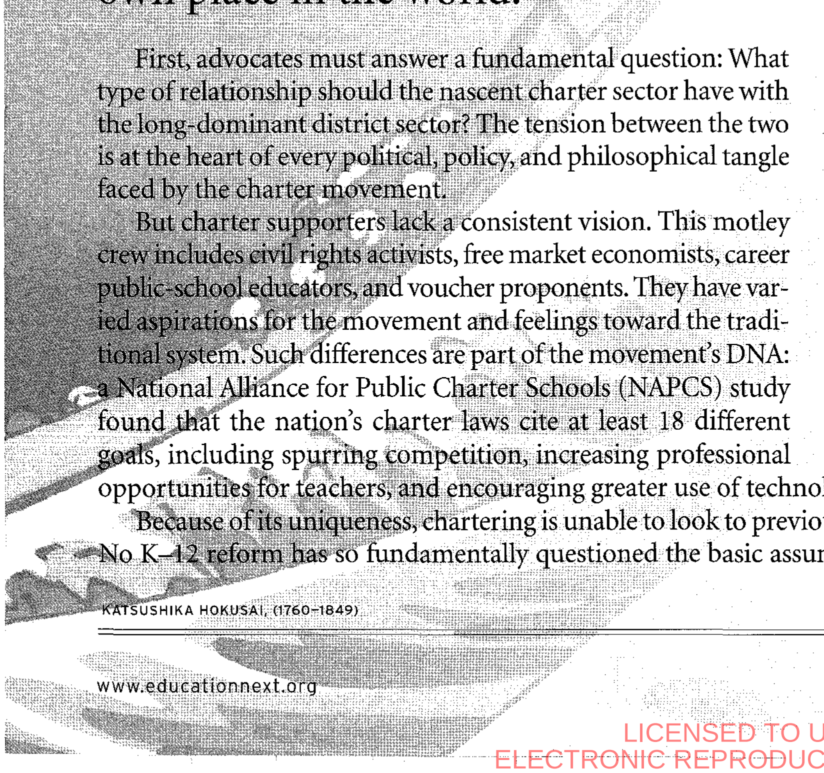
Because of its uniqueness, chartering is unable to look to previous reform efforts for guidance. No K–12 reform has so fundamentally questioned the basic assumptions—school assignments

Gaining Strength (Figure 1)

Although charter schools educate only 2 percent of America's public school students, in some urban areas the charter presence is considerably larger.



SOURCES: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools



KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI, (1760–1849)

based on residence, centralized administrative control, schools lasting in perpetuity—underlying the district model of public education. Even the sweeping standards and assessments movement of the last 20 years, culminating in No Child Left Behind, takes for granted and makes use of the district sector.

Though few charter advocates have openly wrestled with this issue, two camps have organically emerged. The first sees chartering as an education system operating alongside traditional districts. This camp contends that the movement can provide more options and improved opportunities, particularly to disadvantaged students, by simply continuing to grow and serve more families.

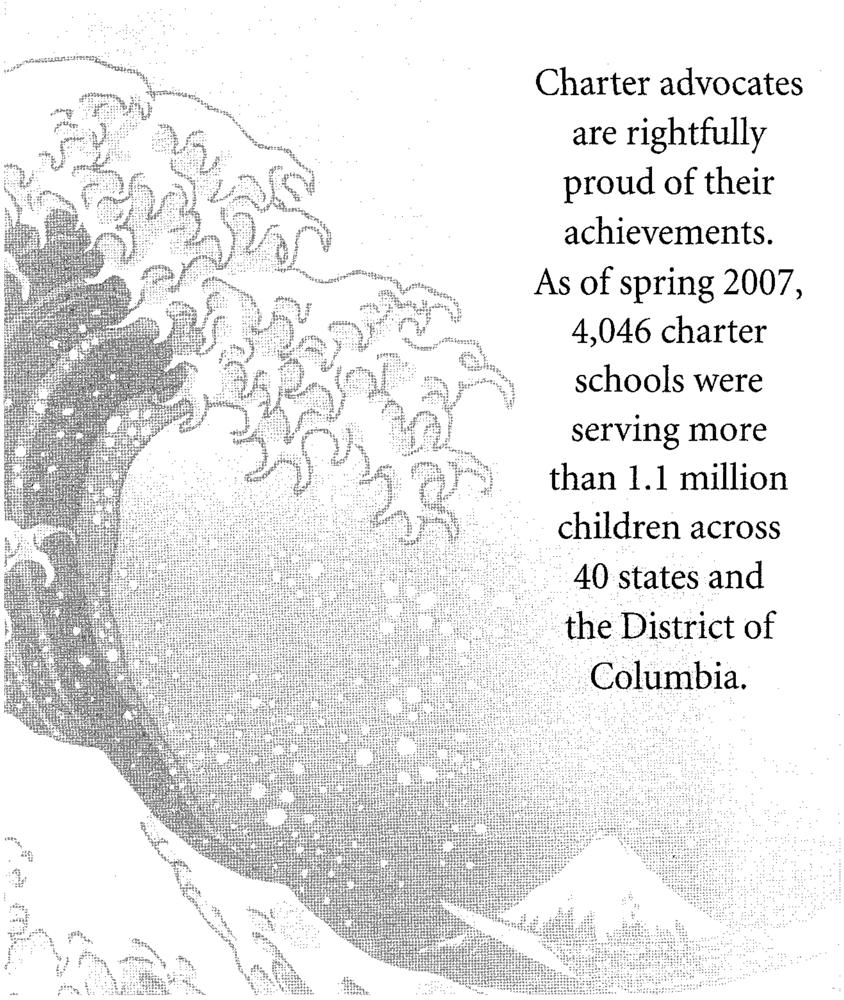
The second group sees chartering as a tool to help the traditional sector improve. Chartering, the argument goes, can spur district improvement through a blend of gentle competitive nudging and neighborly information sharing.

Both camps are deeply mistaken. For numerous policy and political reasons, without a radical change in tactics the movement won't be able to sustain even its current growth rate. And neither decades of sharing best practices nor the introduction of charter competition has caused districts to markedly improve their performance.

Both camps have accepted an exceptionally limited view of what this sector might accomplish. Chartering's potential extends far beyond the role of stepchild or assistant to districts. The only course that is sustainable, for both chartering and urban education, embraces a third, more expansive view of the movement's future: replace the district-based system in America's large cities with fluid, self-improving systems of charter schools.

A Parallel System

Charter advocates are rightfully proud of their achievements. As of spring 2007, 4,046 charter schools were serving more than 1.1 million children across 40 states and the District of Columbia. In a number of cities, charters educate a significant proportion of public school students (see Figure 1). But when compared to the expanse of the traditional district-based system and the educational needs of low-income families, the movement's accomplishments are modest.



Charter advocates are rightfully proud of their achievements. As of spring 2007, 4,046 charter schools were serving more than 1.1 million children across 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Nationwide, only 2 percent of public school students attend charters. Over the last five years, an average of 335 new charters started annually. At this rate, it would take until 2020 for chartering to corner just 5 percent of the national market. Even these humble figures inflate the movement's true national standing. In 2007 nearly two-thirds of charter schools were in only seven states. Today, 24 states have less than 1 percent of their students in charter schools. Though strong expansion continues in places like California and Florida, the 2006–07 school year saw 26 states open five or fewer new schools, while 5 states—because of closures—began the school year with fewer charters than they had the year before.

None of this, however, should be taken as an assault on charters' popularity or effectiveness. In New York, 12,000 students are on charter wait lists; in Massachusetts 19,000; in Pennsylvania 27,000. Students on all of the nation's charter wait lists would fill an estimated 1,121 new charter schools.

Research on student achievement in charters is encouraging. A recent analysis of the charter school studies since 2001 that measured student or school performance over time—the ideal way to measure a school's "value added"—reported that 29 of 33 studies found charters performing as well as or better than traditional public schools. The *New York Times Magazine* spotlighted charter networks KIPP, Uncommon Schools, and

Achievement First in a major feature on how to close the achievement gap. Yet despite these successes, chartering's current status and growth trajectory won't enable it to become a parallel system large enough to serve the millions of needy students across the country within the foreseeable future.

Some might respond, "Then just accelerate growth." But the forces that have held chartering back over the last 15 years aren't going away. Worse, even today's growth levels may be in danger.

Twenty-five states have imposed some type of cap on charter expansion, and in eight states those limits currently constrain growth. The battle against caps must be fought state by state by under-resourced, overextended charter advocates against entrenched opponents. In New York, an expensive and sophisticated multiyear effort by charter advocates that was supported by the governor and New York City's mayor and schools chancellor finally resulted in legislation that raised the cap, but only by 100 schools. The new limit will be reached in just a few years.

Unequal financing is another obstacle. A Fordham Institute study found that on average charters receive $1,800 less per student than traditional public schools, despite serving more disadvantaged students. This discourages educators from starting new charters and traditional schools from converting. It also inhibits existing charters from growing enrollment or expanding to new campuses. Facilities are a major piece of this puzzle. While traditional public schools are provided a building, charters still must find, secure, and pay for a roof and walls. Only 13 states and Washington, D.C., provide some sort of facilities assistance.

The greatest impediment to growth is the wide array of political, legal, and administrative attacks. Institutional players—teachers unions, school boards, and state and district administrators—frequently petition state leaders for charter caps and reduced charter funding and vigorously oppose alternative authorizers and facilities aid. The nationwide Democratic landslide in the 2006 elections left many state governments less charter-friendly. For example, Ted Strickland, Ohio's new Democratic governor, made a moratorium on new charters one of his top priorities.

In a number of states, most recently Ohio and Michigan, coalitions have attacked chartering through the courts. Though these challenges have been beaten back so far, even one loss could force the closure of hundreds of schools. A 2006 Florida Supreme Court decision was foreboding. Striking down the state's voucher plan for contravening the state constitution's requirement of a "uniform" public education system, the court opened the door to challenges to the state's 350 charters, which, by definition, are not uniform.

Finally, chartering is held back by its administrative arrangements. Ninety percent of authorizers are local school districts, many of which view charters as an administrative inconvenience, competitive nuisance, or worse. In a NAPCS survey of charter school leaders, nearly two-thirds said working with the district was a problem. This summer, a high-performing KIPP charter school in Annapolis, Maryland, was forced to close because it couldn't find a permanent facility, even though the school district, according to its own study, had 900 empty seats in a nearby, underutilized school. Responding to the school's pleas for help, the district's superintendent told the local newspaper, "It's not my responsibility. It's not my school."

The "parallel system" approach to chartering's future rests on two mistaken assumptions: first, that by simply creating new schools and not purposely antagonizing the traditional system, chartering wouldn't attract the ire of defenders of the status quo; and second, that if chartering proved successful and popular, the sky was the limit on growth. As it turned out, district stakeholders have fought charters tooth and nail from the beginning, and they have erected policy obstacles that have severed the link between charter demand and supply.

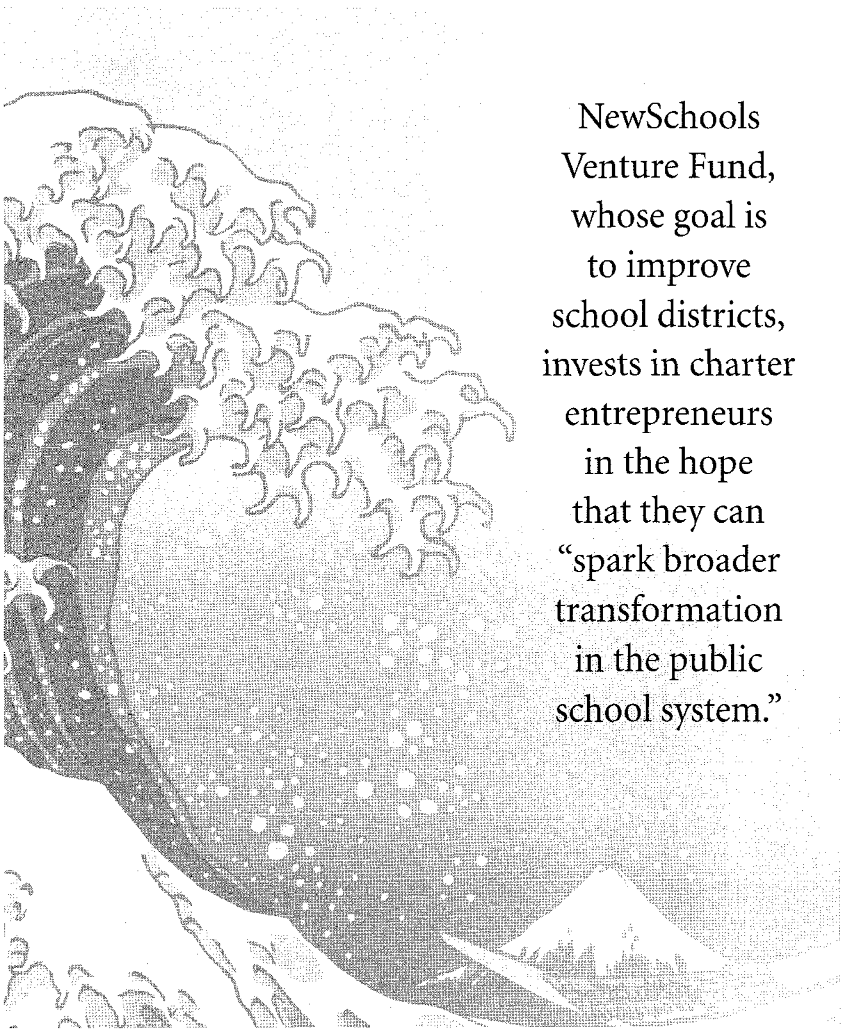
The District Partner

The second camp envisions a vastly improved *traditional* school system, achieved through charter cooperation. This group believes that consistent collaboration between the two sectors would enable charters to experiment and then share lessons learned so all students, the vast majority of whom still attend traditional public schools, could benefit. "I believe that districts and charters will benefit by building more collaborative relationships," says Tom Hutton, a staff attorney for the National School Boards Association and a former board member of the Thurgood Marshall Charter School in Washington, D.C.

Like Hutton, many in this camp are veterans of the traditional system who recognize the value of chartering. But they assume district immortality—districts have been the sole delivery system of public education for generations—and believe a collaborative relationship to be wise, pragmatic, and ultimately necessary. The late Appleton, Wisconsin, superintendent Tom Scullen supported charters within his district but cautioned, "Charter schooling will fail if it tries to become a second track of public education. There isn't enough money to support two systems." Deborah McGriff, executive vice president of Edison Schools and former Detroit superintendent, agrees: "Charters need to start thinking about how we move from suspicion and competition with districts to collaboration and cooperation."

This collaborative relationship is becoming institutionalized. The federal Charter School Program, which provides charter start-up funds, requires that states disseminate charters' best practices to districts. KIPP has an open-door policy for local teachers and principals; they are welcome to visit and take away whatever lessons they can. Funders in particular are buying into this strategy. NewSchools Venture Fund, whose goal is to improve school districts, invests in charter entrepreneurs in the hope that they can "spark broader transformation in the public school system." One of the Boston Foundation's high priorities in its education giving is supporting the sharing of effective practices between chartered and traditional schools.

Though the move toward greater cooperation has emotional appeal, to embrace it you have to believe that districts, including major urban districts, are both willing and able to change and significantly improve student achievement at scale. Sadly, there is *prima facie* evidence that they are not. The achievement gap has been well documented for 40 years: in the Coleman Report, NAEP data, SAT scores, and state assessments. Given the threefold increase in per-pupil spending and countless policy changes, blue-ribbon panel recommendations, and foundation initiatives in the intervening years, it is undeniable that districts have already tried, or have been forced to try, to shape up.



NewSchools Venture Fund, whose goal is to improve school districts, invests in charter entrepreneurs in the hope that they can "spark broader transformation in the public school system."

Diane Ravitch recently reported in the *Education Gadfly* (June 7, 2007) on the disappointing achievement scores from New York City, whose much-heralded schools leader, Joel Klein, has implemented some of the nation's most aggressive reforms. Ravitch found that during Klein's five-year tenure academic gains have been smaller than during the previous five years and that the reading scores of cohorts of students are actually declining as they progress through the system. New York's inability to improve despite major interventions is far from unique. NAEP's Trial Urban District Assessment, which measured the performance of 11 large urban systems in 2005, provides compelling evidence of the futility of district-based reforms: even the highest-performing district studied (Charlotte) had only 29 percent of its 8th graders at or above proficient in reading.

It is unreasonable to believe that charter collaboration will significantly alter these stubbornly disappointing district results. High-performing low-income schools, though too rare, have been documented for decades, and yet their lessons have never been translated into comprehensive district improvement. This is despite major efforts to spread best practices widely, including the work of education schools and $15 billion spent annually on teacher professional development. All in all, the uncomfortable but unavoidable question for collaboration advocates becomes, why should chartering invest in a strategy—helping major urban districts solve the achievement gap—that has consistently failed for 40 years when pursued by others?

Many strong believers in school choice, myself included, were convinced that the competitive pressure exerted by charters would lead to a renaissance in the traditional system. The vast district improvements we expected never materialized. The clearest evidence comes from Dayton, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., two cities with significant charter sectors.

In the nation's capital, 26 percent of students attend one of the city's 71 charter schools. The city's charter sector is remarkably innovative and energetic, including such standouts as KIPP KEY Academy, the SEED School, and DC Prep. Nevertheless, the District's traditional system remains among the very worst in the nation. Of the 11 cities participating in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment in 2005, Washington, D.C., had the lowest scores in math and reading in both grades tested. Among its 8th-grade students, only 12 percent reached proficiency in reading and 7 percent in math. A Progressive Policy Institute study of D.C.'s charter experience summarized the situation perfectly: "There is no clear evidence that charter schools have had a direct impact on student achievement in DCPS schools or otherwise driven systemic reform."

Charters educate 28 percent of Dayton's students. Last year, the district reached only one of 25 state indicators and failed to make AYP. Seventy and 56 percent of its 8th graders failed to reach proficiency in math and reading, respectively. Residents are understandably frustrated: a 2005 Fordham Foundation survey found that 69 percent of Dayton residents are in favor of either major change from the district or an entirely new education system.

Some studies, like those by Hoxby (see "Rising Tide," *research*, Winter 2001) and by Holmes, Desimone, and Rupp (see "Friendly Competition," *research*, Winter 2006) have found a small bump in a district's achievement when it faces charter competition. Bifulco and Ladd (see "Results from the Tar Heel State," *research*, Fall 2005) and Buddin and Zimmer, however, found none. There are legitimate disagreements about the influence of additional factors in these studies, such as the amount of competition, the policy environment, and the type of test data used. But when this research is considered alongside our other experience, the only fair conclusion is that competition hasn't dramatically altered district performance for the better.

Charter competition has caused one unexpected and fascinating phenomenon. When facing a growing number of charters, districts turn to advertising. In January 2006, the Boston Teachers Union and the district were in negotiations to spend $100,000 to promote the virtues of traditional public schools to families choosing charters. Also in early 2006, the Cincinnati district sent letters and held information sessions designed to have charter families reenroll in traditional public schools. In May 2007, the St. Louis district awarded a no-bid contract to a marketing firm to "drive the message of the negative impact of charter schools." Seemingly unable to improve results, districts rely on public relations to stem the migration of students to other schools.

Why is it that major urban school districts are unable to improve student learning at scale? A compelling argument, and a roadmap for charter schooling's future, can be found in Ted Kolderie's excellent and underappreciated book, *Creating the Capacity for Change.* Kolderie applies to K–12 education the lessons Harvard economist Clayton Christensen has drawn from the private sector. Christensen, studying how industries evolve and improve over time, found that critical advancements don't come from old firms changing their ways. They come from new firms (or independent subsidiaries) entering the market, introducing new products and systems, and responding nimbly to the demands of consumers.

When an industry experiences a major change, existing firms find themselves unable to adjust to navigate the new world. Every aspect of its identity—culture, staffing, practices, priorities—was geared toward succeeding in the old environment. When the environment changes, it's impossible for the horse and carriage to transform into a steam locomotive.

The implications for public education are profound. For 150 years, public schooling has been a one-factory town: a board- and superintendent-led district manages, staffs, and oversees an area's entire portfolio of public schools. But in this time, the world has become a radically different place and the expectations of schools have changed even more. As Kolderie points out, if private firms, which are built to respond to competition, are unable to make this kind of leap, we can't expect gigantic, byzantine school systems, which are insulated from competition, shackled by union contracts, and constrained by a sticky web of regulations, to do so.

The system is the issue. The solution isn't an improved traditional district; it's an entirely different delivery system for public education: systems of chartered schools.

Watching New Orleans

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans decided to rebuild its decimated public education system largely as a system of charter schools. The conditions were ideal for this groundbreaking shift: a citywide consensus that the old system had failed; a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a new system from scratch; the availability of federal school start-up funds; and the keen interest of education entrepreneurs, foundations, and support organizations in seeing this bold reform succeed.

Two years into the rebuilding effort, the Crescent City has what might be thought of as a chartered system in the making. First, 60 percent of students are in charters. Second, there is significant diversity in the types of school available, and parents are exercising choice. Third, and most interesting, there is diversity in the suppliers of K-12 public education: the Orleans Parish School board oversees a number of traditional public schools and charters; the state board of education authorizes several charters; and the Recovery School District (an entity created before Katrina to assume control of failing city schools) manages both charters and traditional public schools.

Two questions will determine whether New Orleans will continue moving toward the nation's first fully chartered system. As the city stabilizes, will leaders resist the urge to consolidate power into a single district, instead allowing permanent diversity in schools and school suppliers? Will the city be willing to consistently close poor-performing schools and open new highly accountable, choice-driven institutions so a true market of public education can emerge?

A Transformed System

Charter advocates should strive to have every urban public school be a charter. That is, each school should have significant control over its curriculum, methods, budget, staff, and calendar. Each school should have a contract that spells out its mission and measurable objectives, including guaranteeing that all students achieve proficiency in basic skills. Each school should be held accountable by an approved public body.

"Charter" will no longer be seen as an adjective, a way to describe a type of school, but as a verb, an orderly and sensible process for developing, replicating, operating, overseeing, and closing schools. The system would be fluid, self-improving, and driven by parents and public authority, ensuring the system uses the best of market and government forces. Schools that couldn't attract families would close, as would those that ran afoul of authorizers for academic, financial, or management failures. School start-ups, both the number and their characteristics, would reflect the needs of communities and the interests of students, but would also be tightly regulated to generate a high probability of school success.

So, while the government's role would still be significant, it would no longer operate the city's entire portfolio of public schools. Instead, it would take on a role similar to the FAA's role in monitoring the airline industry or a health department's monitoring of restaurants. Today, we take airline safety for granted and make our choices based on service, connections, and so on. Similarly, we know all restaurants have fire exits and meet food safety standards, so we choose based on our tastes and schedules. A well-regulated chartered school system could guarantee that all public schools were providing a safe, high-quality education and properly managing operations, thereby allowing families to choose a school based on other criteria.

The government's substantial oversight role in guaranteeing safety and quality would differentiate a charter system from a universal voucher program. To many, a voucher system would undesirably blur the lines between church and state, add the profit motive to schooling, remove the "public" from K–12 education, and leave too much to the vicissitudes of the market. By contrast, in a chartered system, public schools would be nonreligious, managed by nonprofits, overseen by a public authority, and held to clear performance standards.

But a chartered system would capitalize on market forces largely absent from district systems, such as constant innovation, competition, and replication. Replication is arguably the most valuable. Chartering has not only created some of America's finest schools, it has enabled their leaders to identify the characteristics that made those schools so remarkable and then develop systems for creating additional, equally successful schools. In addition to well-known charter management organizations like KIPP, Achievement First, and Uncommon Schools, new ones continue to emerge: Green Dot, High Tech High, Aspire, Noble Street, IDEA, and more. Major funders like the Charter School Growth Fund and NewSchools Venture Fund are helping other high-performing charters expand as well.

So how do we transform today's urban district systems into chartered systems? Absent political realities, the shift could be quite simple. Any district could decide tomorrow to relinquish day-to-day control of its schools and develop performance contracts with each. Every school could develop its own governing board and acquire control of its budget, staffing, and curriculum. The district could then change from a central operator to an authorizer, monitoring schools, closing them when necessary, and allowing new ones to open. The "every school a charter school" idea is not new; others, most prominently Paul Hill of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, have been writing variations on this theme for some time.

Unfortunately, for reasons having more to do with power than student learning, this scenario is highly unlikely. Most districts assiduously avoid the loss of one school, let alone all schools. When one of Washington, D.C.'s highest-performing traditional public schools pursued plans to convert to a charter in 2006, the district agreed to several of its demands in exchange for the school's agreement to stop flirting with charter status. This spring, after faculty at Locke High School in Los Angeles signed petitions to convert into a Green Dot charter, district officials scrambled to put together a counterproposal and convinced some teachers to rescind their signatures.

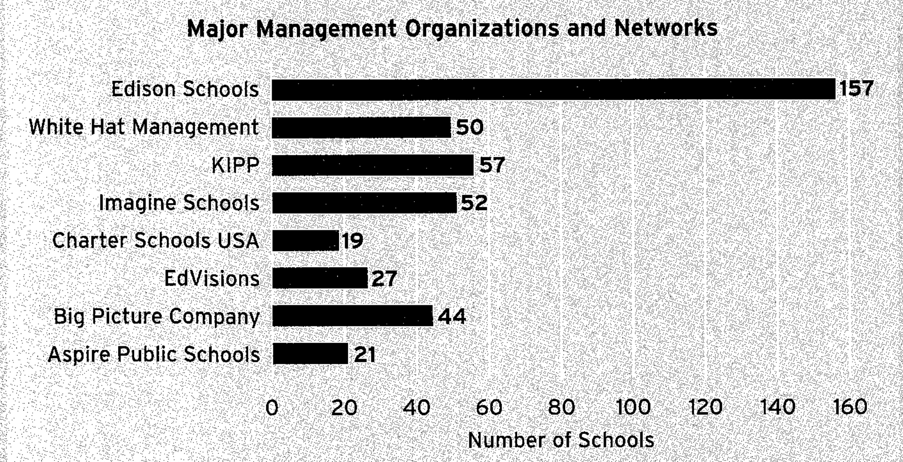
No government entity likes to lose control of any of its components and the budget and prestige that go with them, especially when the loss suggests a failure by the organization. But shifting from an operator into an authorizer would mean cutting hundreds of central office jobs as well: since charters handle their own transportation, facilities, staffing, and more, district employees filling those responsibilities would become redundant. Such a shift, then, would be vigorously opposed by district staff and those who represent them. Countless powerful organizations, like unions, book publishers, and service providers, would also be adversely affected by a decentralized system of schools.

Clearly we can't expect the political process to swiftly bring about charter districts in all of America's big cities. However, if charter advocates carefully target specific systems with an exacting strategy, the current policy environment will allow them to create examples of a new, high-performing system of public education in urban America.

Here, in short, is one roadmap for chartering's way forward: First, commit to drastically increasing the charter market share in a few select communities until it is the

Replicating Charter Success (Figure 2)

A number of organizations are reporting that chartering can be brought to scale by sharing services and practices among networks of independent schools.



SOURCES: Organization websites, accessed October 1, 2007

dominant system and the district is reduced to a secondary provider. The target should be 75 percent. Second, choose the target communities wisely. Each should begin with a solid charter base (at least 5 percent market share), a policy environment that will enable growth (fair funding, nondistrict authorizers, and no legislated caps), and a favorable political environment (friendly elected officials and editorial boards, a positive experience with charters to date, and unorganized opposition). For example, in New York a concerted effort could be made to site in Albany or Buffalo a large percentage of the 100 new charters allowed under the raised cap. Other potentially fertile districts include Denver, Detroit, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Oakland, and Washington, D.C.

Third, secure proven operators to open new schools. To the greatest extent possible, growth should be driven by replicating successful local charters and recruiting high-performing operators from other areas (see Figure 2). Fourth, engage key allies like Teach For America, New Leaders for New Schools, and national and local foundations to ensure the effort has the human and financial capital needed. Last, commit to rigorously assessing charter performance in each community and working with authorizers to close the charters that fail to significantly improve student achievement.

In total, these strategies should lead to rapid, high-quality charter growth and the development of a public school marketplace marked by parental choice, the regular start-up of new schools, the improvement of middling schools, the replication of high-performing schools, and the shuttering of low-performing schools.

As chartering increases its market share in a city, the district will come under growing financial pressure. The district, despite educating fewer and fewer students, will still require a large administrative staff to process payroll and benefits, administer federal programs, and oversee special education. With a lopsided adult-to-student ratio, the district's per-pupil costs will skyrocket.

At some point along the district's path from monopoly provider to financially unsustainable marginal player, the city's investors and stakeholders—taxpayers, foundations, business leaders, elected officials, and editorial boards—are likely to demand fundamental change. That is, eventually the financial crisis will become a political crisis. If the district has progressive leadership, one of two best-case scenarios may result. The district could voluntarily begin the shift to an authorizer, developing a new relationship with its schools and reworking its administrative structure to meet the new conditions. Or, believing the organization is unable to make this change, the district could gradually transfer its schools to an established authorizer.

A more probable district reaction to the mounting pressure would be an aggressive political response. Its leadership team might fight for a charter moratorium or seek protection from the courts. Failing that, they might lobby for additional funding so the district could maintain its administrative structure despite the vast loss of students. Reformers should expect and prepare for this phase of the transition process.

In many ways, replacing the district system seems inconceivable, almost heretical. Districts have existed for generations, and in many minds, the traditional system is synonymous with public education. However, the history of urban districts' inability to provide a high-quality education to their low-income students is nearly as long. It's clear that we need a new type of system for urban public education, one that is able to respond nimbly to great school success, chronic school failure, and everything in between. A chartered system could do precisely that.

Andy Smarick is former congressional aide and charter school founder. Until recently, he served as chief operating officer of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

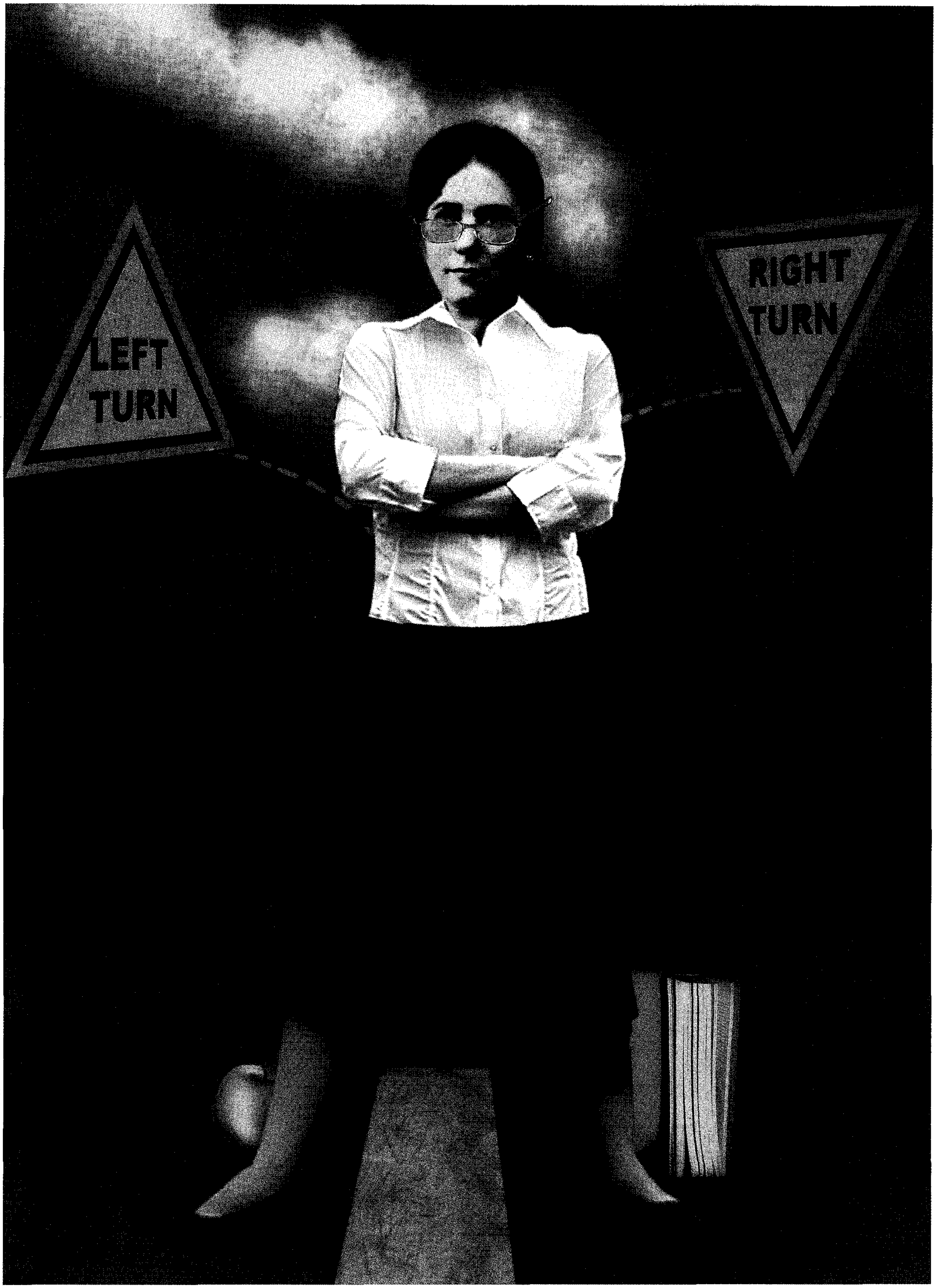

LEFT TURN
RIGHT TURN

ILLUSTRATION / MICHAEL MORGENSTERN

American Teachers

What do they believe?

In our liberal-democratic society there is always a desire to separate the teaching of values from the teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics, the so-called value-neutral subjects. But we have learned—and every parent who has done homework with his child knows—that, like it or not, we teach values in the course of teaching these subjects. We teach, for example, the values of hard work, of doing things that we might not like, of persevering in the face of difficulty, of listening to and respecting the efforts of adults, of self-initiated effort, of postponement of gratification, and of meeting deadlines. All of these simple lessons are moral instruction, lessons about what is important and about what ought to be taken seriously. So even if what we teach is value-neutral, our teaching—by the manner in which we do it and the nature of our interactions in the course of it—conveys messages to our children about how they should regard themselves, consider others, and meet their obligations. Teaching is as much a moral effort as it is an intellectual enterprise; teachers not only educate our children how to think and solve problems, they also inform children's beliefs about what is right, good, and important in life, shaping their values in the process.

There are nearly three and a half million public and private elementary and secondary teachers in the United States, more individuals by far than in any other occupation. During the course of the 2005–06 school year, each teacher spent upward of 1,260 hours working with our nation's 54 million elementary and secondary school students. It would seem useful to know something about the values they hold. Where do America's elementary and secondary school teachers stand on freedom of speech, family values, and economic inequality, for example? What do they believe about religion and human nature?

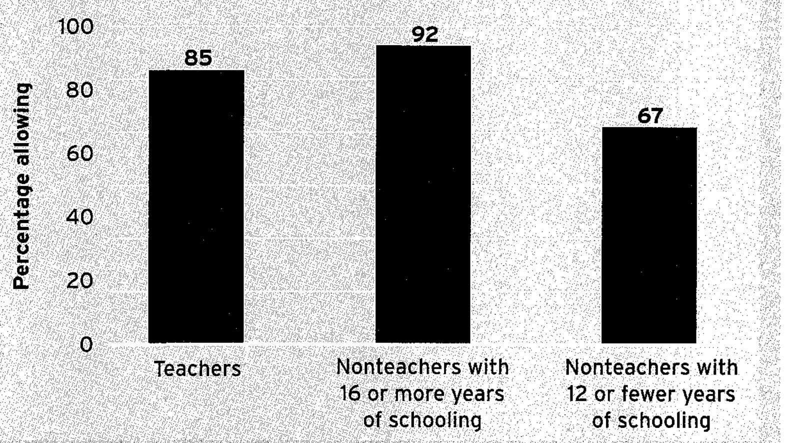
The short answer to these questions is that we simply do not know. There has been a good deal of

BY ROBERT O. SLATER

Who Likes Free Speech? (Figure 1)

Teachers are more supportive of the right to speak out against religion than other, less-educated Americans, but are less supportive than nonteachers with a similar level of education.

If a person wanted to make a speech in your town against churches and religion, should he be allowed to speak, or not? (2006)



SOURCE: National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey (via the Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program at the University of California, Berkeley)

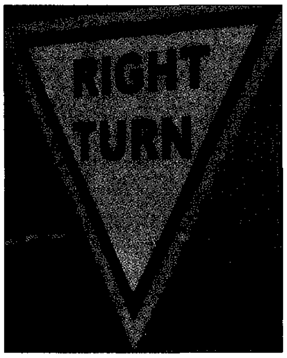
quality research and knowledge generated about teachers in the context of teaching. But when it comes to their lives outside of education, especially their general values and beliefs, we have relatively little empirical knowledge, especially of the American teaching cadre as a whole.

To get a better sense of teachers' values, we can turn to the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) General Social Survey, one of the largest, most reliable, and frequently used data sets in the social sciences. It is an almost-annual, national sample of Americans in which, of course, teachers are included. The version used here is the one made conveniently available online by the Computer-Assisted Survey Methods Program at the University of California, Berkeley. What follows is a summary description of some values of America's public and private elementary and secondary school teachers gleaned from data collected from 1972 to 2006.

Demographics

The teaching profession is surprisingly homogeneous, according to 2004 data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Most of the elementary and secondary school teachers in this country are women, about 75 percent overall, and 90 percent of those who teach in elementary schools. Most are white; only about 9 percent of America's elementary and secondary school teachers are African American, compared to about 13 percent of the U.S. population as a whole and about 16 percent of their students. Most teachers are in their 40s; their median age is 46.

If we examine the NORC data from 2000 to 2006, we find that, on average, our teachers have been in the classroom for about 14 years. For their efforts, they earn about $43,000 a year, close to the $43,954 median annual earnings of Americans with bachelor's degrees. In 2006, two-thirds of America's teachers said they were very satisfied with their work, and that they would either certainly or probably be willing to teach again.



Most of the elementary and secondary teachers in this country are women, about 75 percent overall, and 90 percent of those who teach in elementary schools. Most are white; only about 9 percent of America's teachers are African American.

Free Speech

For almost every year from 1972 to 2006, Americans have been asked if they would allow a communist, homosexual, atheist, or racist to speak in their community, teach at a local college, or have their books in the local library. On the face of it, teachers seem to have been somewhat more likely to support free speech than other Americans. Combining the data for the entire four-decade period, we find that about 71 percent of teachers have supported the free-speech rights of these four types, while only about 58 percent of other Americans have.

Education has a powerful effect on Americans' valuation of the right to free speech. In 2006, for example, 67 percent of Americans with a high school education or less would allow an atheist to speak, but 91 percent of those with 16 or more years of schooling would. Highly educated Americans are about 24 percentage points more likely than their less-educated counterparts to support the free-speech rights of an atheist.

Teachers tend to be more educated than other Americans, averaging more than 16 years of formal schooling compared to about 13 years. Accordingly, their being more supportive of free speech is likely due to their higher education levels. But, somewhat surprisingly, when we compare teachers and others with similarly high levels of education, we find that teachers tend on average to be less supportive of free-speech rights (see Figure 1). On the issue of free speech, teachers are progressive relative to nonteachers, but conservative relative to nonteachers with high levels of schooling.

Social Issues

Over the last four decades, Americans in general have grown more tolerant of homosexuality. In the 1970s, 13 percent of nonteachers said there is nothing wrong with homosexuality. By 2006, 32 percent of them felt this way. During the 1970s, 18 percent of teachers also saw nothing wrong with it. By 2006, about a third saw nothing wrong with it; there was no significant difference between the two groups. If we control for education, however, we find that in each of the four decades, teachers are from 10 to 15 percentage points less likely than other Americans with 16 or more years of schooling to see nothing wrong with homosexuality (see Figure 2).

About 60 percent of teachers and an equal proportion of other Americans say they are opposed to legalized abortion. Analysis of the survey data show class, gender, and education are all positively correlated with being in favor of legalized abortion. Americans who place themselves in the middle or upper classes, women, and the more highly educated all tend to favor abortion being legal. But teachers are about 14 percentage points more likely to oppose abortion for any reason than highly educated nonteachers—that is, they are more conservative on the issue.

American teachers tend to be more conservative than other Americans on issues of pornography as well. In 2006, 50 percent of teachers said they would make pornography illegal, while only 38 percent of nonteachers shared this view. The difference between teachers and highly educated nonteachers is even greater: only 29 percent of nonteachers would make pornography illegal.

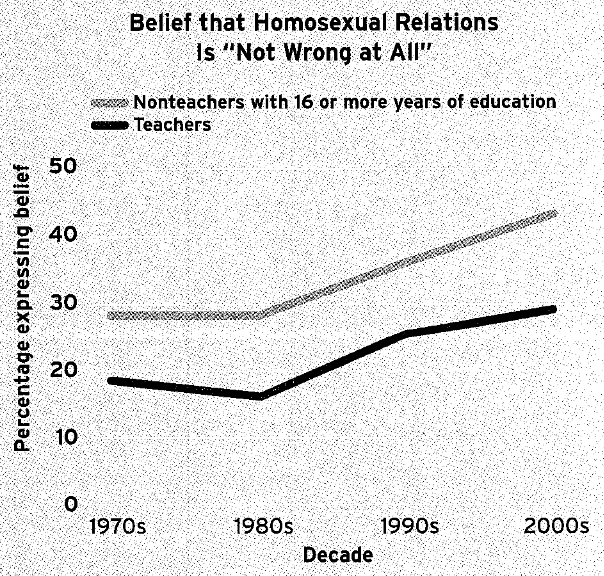
Religion

God and religion play an important role in the lives of more than half of all Americans. In a study conducted by the European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association, 58 percent of the U.S. population said that God was very important in their lives, a greater percentage by far than in the populations of other developed countries such as Great Britain (14 percent), France (8), Italy (33), Japan (7), Spain (17), or Germany (9).

Religion and education have always had a close relationship in the United States. The country's first institution of higher education, Harvard College, was established in 1636 to train ministers. Many of the country's first teachers were ministers and parsons. Even when women came to dominate the teaching field, religious values were still a priority. We should not be surprised if elementary and secondary school teachers value religion highly, perhaps even more highly than Americans in general. But do they?

Tolerance of Homosexuality (Figure 2)

Compared to other educated Americans, teachers have consistently expressed more conservative views on homosexuality.

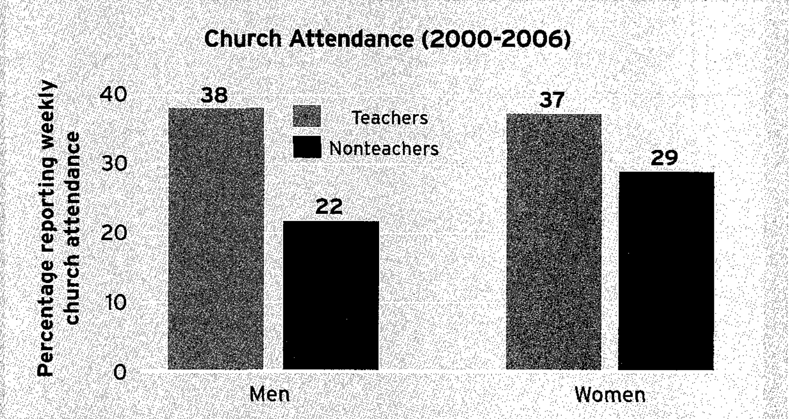


SOURCE: National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey (via the Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program at the University of California, Berkeley)

According to the NORC survey data from the current decade, about 37 percent of teachers say they attend church one or more times per week, while 26 percent of other Americans say they do so. Controlling for the education of nonteachers does not affect this difference. Of those nonteachers with 16 or more years of schooling, 28 percent regularly attend church.

Church Attendance (Figure 3)

Both male and female teachers are more likely than their nonteaching counterparts to report that they regularly attend church.



SOURCE: National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey (via the Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program at the University of California, Berkeley)

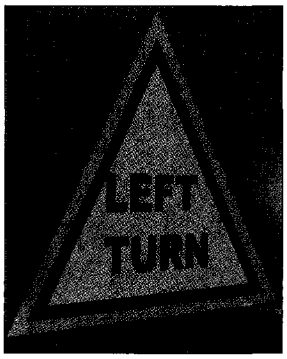
Looking at the data across the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, we find that teachers are about 9 to 11 percentage points more likely than other Americans as a whole to pray one or more times per day. During the 1980s and 1990s, Americans were asked how close they felt to God. Teachers were about 8 percentage points more likely than other Americans to report feeling "extremely close" to God.

Why do teachers, by these measures, seem more religious than other Americans? Perhaps the differences are due to gender. Most teachers are women, and women are more likely than men to be frequent churchgoers and more likely to pray one or more times a day. In fact, we find teachers of both genders to be more religious than nonteachers. Female teachers are about 8 percentage points more likely to attend church frequently than female nonteachers, and male teachers are 16 percentage points more likely to attend church frequently than male nonteachers (see Figure 3). Teachers are apparently more religious than other Americans, regardless of gender or education.

Does teachers' religious orientation translate into support for school prayer? Do they approve or disapprove of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that prohibits prayer in public schools? Given the priority that teachers tend to give to religion, we might reasonably expect to find them more disapproving of the ruling than other Americans. At the same time, however, teachers have a relatively high level of education, and the more education Americans have, the more they tend to approve of the Supreme Court's ban on school prayer. In 2006 about 57 percent of nonteachers were against the Supreme Court's ban on school prayer, while only 36 percent of teachers opposed it. But, again, the difference seems to be largely due to education. Looking at only those with 16 or more years of schooling, we see no significant difference between teachers and nonteachers, with slightly more than one-third of each group opposing it.

Economic Inequality

While there is disagreement about how much economic inequality exists in the United States, about 45 percent of teachers and nonteachers believe the government ought to act



Teachers have a relatively high level of education, and the more education Americans have, the more they tend to approve of the Supreme Court's ban on school prayer. In 2006 about 57 percent of nonteachers were against the Supreme Court's ban on school prayer, while only 36 percent of teachers opposed it.

to reduce income differences. This sentiment has remained fairly stable over the last four decades, decreasing only slightly from about 48 percent in the 1970s to about 46 percent in the current decade, and teachers have not differed significantly from this mainstream view.

Americans have also been asked whether the government should help the poor. Since the 1970s, the percentage of all Americans who believe the government should help the poor has dropped from about 40 percent to about 28 percent, a 30 percent decline. Over the same period, the percentage of Americans who felt that the poor should help themselves climbed only from 24 to 26 percent.

Where do teachers stand on whether the government should help the poor? They have followed much the same trajectory as all Americans, but declining more sharply, going from about 48 percent in the 1970s, to 24 percent in the current decade, a 50 percent drop.

The chord of individualism struck by Ronald Reagan and carried on by his successors has clearly had an impact. But it has not resulted in a wholesale movement away from government lending a hand to the poor. The trend has been toward a mixed approach, in which the government is expected to help the poor and the poor are also expected to help themselves.

Human Nature

Every good teacher looks for the human potential in her students; she works with the hope that it can ultimately be realized, that it will be at its best and not at its worst, and that she will have had some hand, however small, in the business of human betterment. Because the work of teachers addresses the development and growth of human beings, the teacher must necessarily be concerned with human character. Whether she wishes to admit it or not, she works with a set of beliefs about human nature. Sometimes these take the form of conscious beliefs about the nature of human beings. More often they are assumptions seldom articulated but ever present in her daily work. In either case, her beliefs and values shape how she goes about her work and interacts with children. It is useful, therefore, to examine briefly some indicators of what teachers think about the nature of human beings and the world they live in.

The NORC survey contains a set of questions about how the respondent views the world and the people who inhabit it: Is the world basically evil and full of sin or is it essentially good, reflecting God's goodness? If we look at the data from all of the years the question has been asked, 1985–2002, we find that about 69 percent of teachers believe the world is more good than evil, compared to about 53 percent of other Americans. Teachers are about 6 percentage points more likely to see it as good than other Americans with 16 or more years of education.

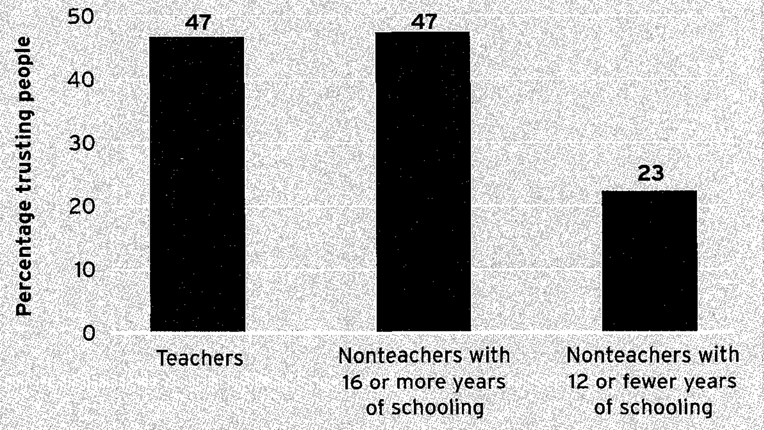
Trust is one of the building blocks of social capital; it is our willingness and capacity to cooperate to solve common problems. Without it, little productive economic and social activity can occur. This is as true in schools as it is in other social institutions.

The more education people have, the more trusting they tend to be. In 2006, highly educated Americans were about 24 percentage points more likely to be trusting than the least educated: only 23 percent of Americans with a high school education or less said that people could be trusted, while 47 percent of those with 16 or more years of schooling felt this way. If we control for the education of nonteachers, we find that teachers tend to be no more or less trusting than educated nonteachers (see Figure 4).

Trusting Others (Figure 4)

In stark contrast to Americans with less education, teachers and other college-educated Americans are as likely as not to report that other people are trustworthy.

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in life? (2006)



SOURCE: National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey (via the Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program at the University of California, Berkeley)

Schooling for Democracy

As a group, American teachers tend to be more supportive of free-speech rights than other Americans, but when

Though better-educated Americans tend to be more liberal, teachers appear to be somewhat of an exception. On homosexuality and abortion, teachers tend to be more liberal than less-educated Americans but more conservative than those with high levels of education.

compared to other Americans with 16 or more years of schooling teachers are less supportive of this important democratic value. We see a conservative tendency when we examine teachers' family values as well. Though better-educated Americans tend to be more liberal, teachers appear to be somewhat of an exception. On homosexuality and abortion, teachers tend to be more liberal than less-educated Americans but more conservative than those with high levels of education. Teachers also attend church and pray more than nonteachers, additional indications of their conservative leanings. Finally, over the past four decades, support among teachers for the liberal view that the government should help the poor has declined more sharply than it has for other Americans.

Teachers' conservative propensity does not appear to be uniform across their values. They are more liberal than nonteachers, for example, when it comes to school prayer, a stance seemingly inconsistent with their strong religious turn. Moreover, they seem to be more likely to see the world as good, and they tend to be more trusting than other Americans.

When it comes to some important values, then, teachers seem to present something of a paradox: they are both progressive and conservative. That teachers have a conservative inclination is not a new observation but goes back at least to John Dewey's work and to Dan Lortie's classic *Schoolteacher*. As members of a society committed to the democratic ideal as a chief organizing principle, should we be concerned by teachers' conservative tendencies?

In a democratic society people are free to be as conservative or liberal as their intelligence and conscience lead, but institutions built to nurture and sustain such a society are not, nor are their programs. Whether we wish to admit it or not, every education system tries to produce a certain kind of human being, attempts to develop in people dispositions to think, feel, and act in certain ways. The particular dispositions to be developed are themselves informed by the political-economic system in which the education system functions. A tyranny, a society in which only one person holds most of the power and rules with self-interest, requires that people think, feel, and act in ways supportive of an authoritarian regime. The primary aim of education in such a society is not to teach people to think for themselves or question things as they are. It is rather to dispose them to be compliant and obedient. In a democracy, not one but the many are supposed to rule in the interest of the whole. People need to be disposed to learn and appreciate the values of freedom and equality, the importance of trust, and the priority of reason and law. Such a society relies upon its schools and teachers to develop these and other democratic dispositions in its students. Accordingly, we should want and expect our teachers, more than others, to be disposed to think and feel in ways supportive of a democracy. So, for example, we would prefer to find our teachers falling more on the side of freedom and equality than of censorship, coercion, and inequality.

In more practical terms, this means that we should expect our teachers to be committed to the democratic ideal as an organizing principle for our society and for instruction in their classrooms. Preservice programs should help teachers develop the disposition to look persistently for ways to teach in accord with the democratic ideal, and to seek ways to minimize distractions from this important task. Finally, and perhaps most important in our time, commitment to the democratic ideal as an organizing principle does not mean commitment to any particular social or political ideology. It rather depends on a felt need, what in Spanish is called a "necessidad sentida," to understand the American experiment at its best and to see it realized in the classroom.

Robert O. Slater is professor of education at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette.

contentions

commentary's blog

contributors include

incisive daily analysis of politics, art & music, history, national security, Jewish affairs, books, culture, economics, science, architecture, and much more to come

Max Boot
Daniel Casse
David Gelernter
Hillel Halkin
Daniel Johnson
Yuval Levin
Michael J. Lewis
Joshua Muravchik
Emanuele Ottolenghi
Gary Rosen
Lisa Schiffren
Gabriel Schoenfeld
Terry Teachout
Ruth R. Wisse

commentarymagazine.com/blog

POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

PSQ is the most widely read and accessible journal of public and international affairs. Published continuously since 1886 by the Academy of Political Science, ***PSQ*** presents authoritative analysis essential to understanding today's complex world.

PSQ publishes in-depth articles on both domestic and foreign affairs, with each issue containing some 35 book reviews. Moreover, the ***Quarterly***'s editorial advisory board is composed of outstanding scholars from the nation's leading universities and think tanks.

If you haven't been reading ***PSQ***, you've missed articles and book reviews by world-class scholars, including essays on education such as *Schoolyard Revolutions: How Research on Urban School Reform Undermines Reform* by Joseph P. Viteritti and *Urban Education Reform and Minority Political Empowerment* by Stefanie Chambers.

Subscribe and receive free online access to *PSQ*'s fully searchable archive, dating back to 1996.

"Most serious journals are narrow; most journals which are broad in scope are not serious. ***PSQ*** *is the exception: a journal which is both broad in scope and serious in content. It is must reading for social scientists and informed citizens interested in public affairs."*

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON
Harvard University

SUBSCRIBE TO ***PSQ*** BY JOINING THE ACADEMY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE.

Name ______________________
Address ______________________
City ______________________
State __________ Zip __________

Send to:
THE ACADEMY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1274
New York, NY 10115-1274
Tel (212) 870-2500 • Fax (212) 870-2202

ACADEMY MEMBERSHIP

☐ $49, 1 year ☐ $35, student

☐ Check enclosed.
☐ Charge my: ◇ AMEX ◇ Visa ◇ MasterCard
Outside USA add $8/year.

Card # ______________________
Exp. Date ______________________
Signature ______________________

Visit *PSQ*'s website at http://www.psqonline.org

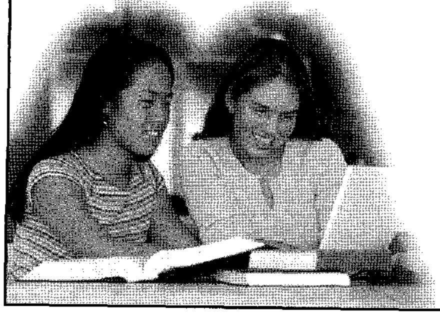
National Charter School Clearinghouse

Linking you to more answers!

www.NCSC.info

An organization devoted to the national dissemination of information on charter schools:

"Your passion for students is supported by NCSC"



Resources

Research

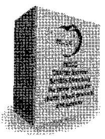
News

Funding

FAQs

and more

CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICE DIRECTORY



The nation's **first** and **only** online yellow pages for charter schools

Reach customers quickly & economically in this directory designed for the charter school community

www.NCSC.info/services

FREE Registration
Subscribe at
www.NCSC.info

Election 2008: THE EDUCATION Debate

In the 2000 election, President Bush's pledge to combat the "soft bigotry of low expectations" was a pillar of his compassionate conservatism and crucial to his razor-thin margin of victory. That election begat the now-controversial No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The law has split the Right between those who cheer accountability and those who jeer federal overreach and insufficient attention to school choice. Among the Left, those who see a punitive law that's unfair to teachers scuffle with NCLB hawks committed to closing racial achievement gaps. So far, those debates have drawn little attention on the stump, as the campaigns focus on Iraq and immigration, terrorism and taxes. Will education matter in '08? Are the political parties as deeply divided on education issues as on tax issues and foreign policy? Two leading political consultants—Democrat Chris Lehane and Republican David Winston—offer their takes. Lehane calls for the Democrats to seize the mantle of reform, while Winston assures GOP candidates they need only to stay the course.

ILLUSTRATION / JAMES STEINBERG

The Democratic Take
by Christopher S. Lehane 56

The Right Republican Strategy
by David Winston 61

The Democratic Take

BY CHRISTOPHER S. LEHANE

The 2008 presidential election stands as a "change" election. The public's anxiety over the challenges globalization poses to the future of the American Dream is driving a desire for the country to change direction. The American people understand that what will give the nation a competitive advantage in a global marketplace are the skills, creativity, and drive of its citizens.

Today, America's public education system gets a "gentleman's C." Our public school students consistently rank average or below average in international comparisons of student achievement. A study by University of Pennsylvania researchers, which has been used to counter arguments that America's public education system is not working as well as it should, found that the U.S. was generally a bit above average when compared with other industrialized nations and in the middle in the important subjects of math and science. Imagine the public outcry if a study concluded that the U.S. was in the middle of the pack or just slightly better than average when it came to our per-capita income or our nation's military strength?

Pay our teachers more, expand our preschool programs, and instill a culture of high expectations

Given the enormous changes taking place in the world, the current education achievement gap between low-income and affluent students, and the logical nexus between a nation's economic strength and the quality of its public education system, it is incumbent on our country to put in place a national education strategy. Leaders in the Democratic Party have the opportunity to step up to the plate and provide leadership and public policy solutions.

First, a national education plan would animate the Democratic Party's ideological commitment to providing equal opportunity for all. It is imperative that minority children receive the same level of educational opportunity as white children. If we want high-tech businesses and high-quality jobs being developed in the United States rather than in China, all of our children need to be prepared to earn a good living. We simply cannot afford to allow segments of our population to lack the skills needed to compete in the global economy.

Second, whenever the U.S. has moved from one era to another, the public has historically looked to the government to take the lead in addressing the attendant challenges. This pattern holds true today, whether the challenge is global warming, terrorism, immigration, disaster relief, or education. For the Democrats, a party that philosophically believes that government should and can play an important role in providing for both the national and economic security of our country, the public's desire for government action is an enormous opportunity to demonstrate leadership (see Figure 1).

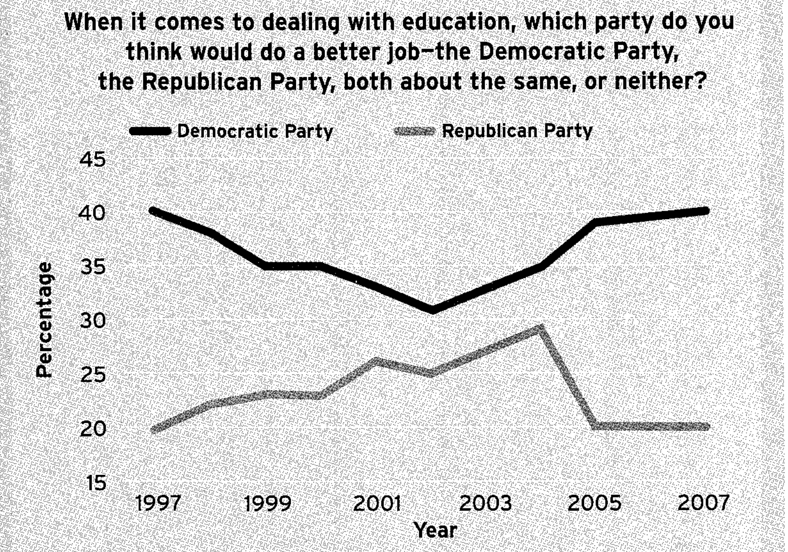
Third, a national education strategy offers Democrats the chance to best the Republican Party politically by standing as protector of the American Dream. Communicating a clear economic philosophy will help the party beat the standard Republican play that raises the specter of higher taxes in every discussion about investing in the country's future. Linking a high-performing public education system with a strong economy and our country's national security at a time when voters, especially middle-class voters, are connecting these dots themselves will give Democrats a winning public policy agenda.

So far in the 2008 presidential campaign, public education has not been a breakthrough issue for the Democratic candidates. To be sure, a number of the candidates have strong public education credentials, and virtually all consistently touch on the subject. But none of the Democratic presidential candidates have discussed thematically the central role public education will play in addressing the challenges of globalization.

Three principles should guide the candidates as they seize the opportunity to get out in front on the critical issue of transforming our public schools to be the best in the world.

The Trust Gap (Figure 1)

The perceived Democratic advantage on education narrowed in the years leading up to the 2000 election and after the passage of No Child Left Behind, but has returned in the waning years of the Bush administration.



When it comes to dealing with education, which party do you think would do a better job–the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, both about the same, or neither?

SOURCE: NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll (various dates), collected from the Roper Center for Public Opinion and Research iPoll Databank

A Democratic Education Agenda

Principle I: Support Teachers

Everyone knows what a tremendous impact a great teacher can make on a child's life. Studies consistently show that the single most important factor in improving student achievement is a quality teacher. If America is going to improve its schools, we must do a better job of attracting our most passionate and high-achieving individuals to the classroom. With the baby-boom generation retiring in large numbers, we are facing a historic shortage of teachers. In California, the state teaching shortage could be as high as 100,000 within 10 years.

The U.S. also needs to make it easier for those who want to become teachers to join the ranks, including creating an alternative credentialing route that recognizes nonteaching professional backgrounds and supports high achievers looking to transition into the classroom. There are many nonprofit programs making a difference that could be expanded. Teach For America, an organization that recruits high-achieving college students to make a two-year commitment to teaching in the inner city, was ranked by college graduates as one of the 10 most wanted employers. In addition, many professionals have the passion to teach, and they will pursue teaching if we make it a more viable option. We might be talking about an attorney who has practiced law for 15 years and wants to give something back, or an engineer who has 20 years of military service. It is critical to acknowledge the value in those backgrounds and create a streamlined credentialing process.

So far in the 2008 presidential campaign, public education has not been a breakthrough issue for the Democratic candidates. None have discussed the central role public education will play in addressing the challenges of globalization.

Finally, plain and simple, we need to pay our teachers more, especially those teaching in underserved communities and high-need subject areas. In response to the teaching shortage, school officials in Los Angeles have offered teachers a $5,000 stipend to work in low-performing schools, and New York City officials provide $5,000 for a down payment on a house to educators teaching in mathematics, science, and special education.

Principle II: Think Pre-K–16

Our children begin their required schooling too late and graduate too early. If we are serious about educating our children, we need to start them at the same age they begin playing organized sports—the pre-K years—and see them through college, the level of education needed to succeed in an Information Age economy.

Pre-K programs provide a critical education foundation. Studies have demonstrated that children with access to high-quality pre-K education graduate from high school in higher rates, perform better on standardized tests, are less likely to go to jail, and are more likely to have greater employment and wage-earning opportunities. Economist Robert Lynch recently released a study, *Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation*, which found that providing pre-K education produces large, measurable economic benefits for children and the nation. The Lynch study estimated that the total annual budgetary, crime, and earnings benefits from a universal program in place nationwide would be $779 billion by 2050.

We also need to extend public education through four years of college. Virtually all the research shows that a college degree affords better pay, more options, and a brighter economic future. According to the 2006 Graduation Project report, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a college grad earned 50 percent more than someone with only a high school degree in 1980. By 2004, a college graduate earned nearly double.

Maine, a state with a low college attendance rate that is losing its blue-collar jobs as the forestry, fishing, boat-building, and paper-making industries contract, is considering requiring students to apply to college or postsecondary vocational schooling before receiving a high school diploma. The thinking is that making applying to higher education mandatory will encourage college attendance, which in turn will help create a generation of children who will be able to compete as well as attract the jobs of the future to the state. Other states, such as Georgia, have made college accessible by providing free tuition for high school graduates who are able to maintain a specified grade-point average. It is time to take what is going on in these states to the next level by transforming our K–12 system of free public schools to pre-K through 16 nationwide.

Principle III: Instill a Public School Culture of High Expectations

One of the challenges facing schools, especially those serving disadvantaged populations, is the expectations ceiling. Simply put, it is too widely accepted that some students cannot succeed. Where low expectations persist, schools face safety and discipline challenges and practice social promotion, moving kids along regardless of whether they have the skill set needed to succeed in the next grade.

America's public schools must be committed to shattering the "expectations ceiling." It was thought early on that public charter schools would serve as "laboratories of education," where independence, flexibility, and innovation would produce high-quality learning environments that could be replicated across the country. While charter school performance has been mixed to date, a growing number of brand-name charter schools are having tremendous success in communities where high student achievement was thought impossible. Amistad Academy in New Haven, KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Academy in Houston, Texas, and Green Dot Ánimo

High School, located in the barrio in East Los Angeles, are well-documented examples. These schools hold students accountable for achievement; extend the school day, week, and year; and give principals the autonomy to hire the most skilled teachers. The students at Amistad Academy, who are 97 percent minority and 84 percent poor, are told again and again that they will go to college. Amistad's philosophy is that low-income, minority children can succeed as well as white middle-class students if only they are exposed to quality teachers, a culture of high expectations, and an extended school day. In recent years, 86 percent of the school's 8th graders passed the state's writing test, above the statewide average of 62 percent and better than the public schools of wealthy Greenwich. These schools are beginning to replicate nationwide. In just over a decade, KIPP has grown from 2 schools to 57 schools in 17 states.

The success of these brand-name schools is having an impact on the traditional public school system. In Massachusetts, a pilot extended-day program in which 10 elementary schools have eight-hour days has led to higher attendance and achievement. Governor Deval Patrick has allocated $6.5 million to expand the program to more Massachusetts schools. We need to support laws and policies that allow proven education models, in both charters and traditional schools, to flourish in our education landscape.

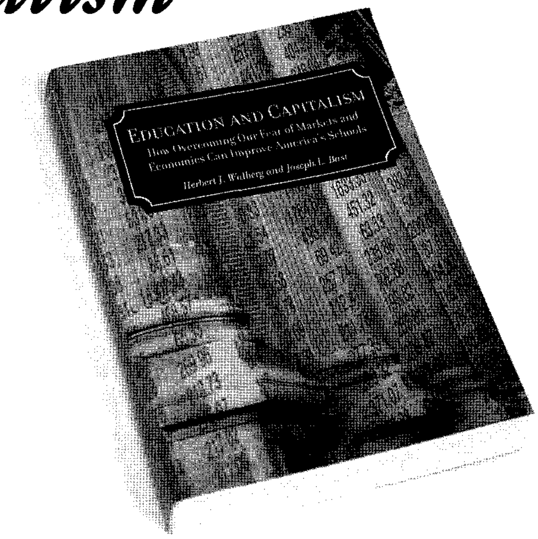
During the recent immigration reform debate, high-tech companies, trade groups representing high-tech companies, and elected officials contended that it was in America's economic interest to allow skilled workers to enter the country on H-1B visas. They argued that these workers are essential to the ability of America's high-tech companies to compete against their foreign-based competitors. The fact that the very high-tech companies that represent America's economic future have to look abroad for workers with the needed skills is a chilling sign that we have to get our act together when it comes to public education. America's future depends on hitting the books and turning a grade C public education system to an A+ public education system. And to make this grade, we will need a president who is capable of being both a commander in chief and superintendent in chief.

Christopher S. Lehane, a California-based Democratic political consultant, served as press secretary for former vice president Al Gore and was special assistant counsel to President Bill Clinton.

Education and Capitalism

How Overcoming Our Fear of Markets and Economics Can Improve America's Schools

One copy **FREE** to principals of charter, parochial, and independent schools who submit a request on letterhead.


Education and Capitalism
How Overcoming Our Fear of Markets and Economies Can Improve America's Schools
Herbert J. Walberg and Joseph L. Bast

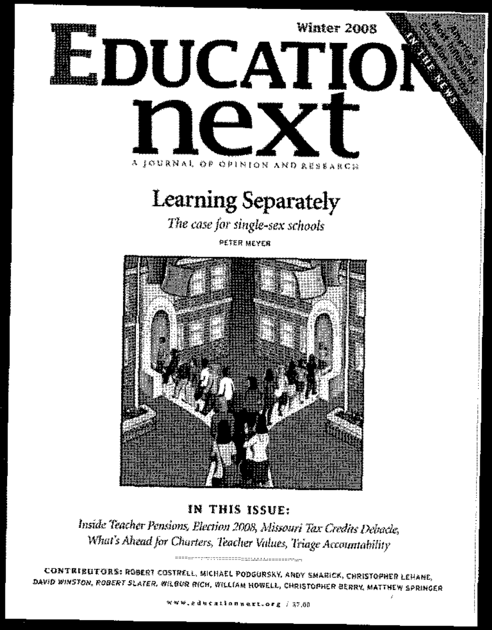
"Walberg and Bast have written a scholarly, readable, and timely book that cogently explains how market competition can promote school improvement. I recommend it as a college-level text in economics, education or public policy, and to anyone who cares about the education of our children."

JOSEPH P. VITERITTI, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Order Your Copy Today!

Fax us your request on letterhead to 312.377.5000 or write The Heartland Institute at
19 S. LaSalle Street #903, Chicago, IL 60603
These and other great books are also available for purchase on our Web site. Visit **www.heartland.org**.

Interested in Education?



Winter 2008

EDUCATION next

A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH

America's Most Influential Education Journal

IN THE NEWS

Learning Separately

The case for single-sex schools

PETER MEYER

IN THIS ISSUE:

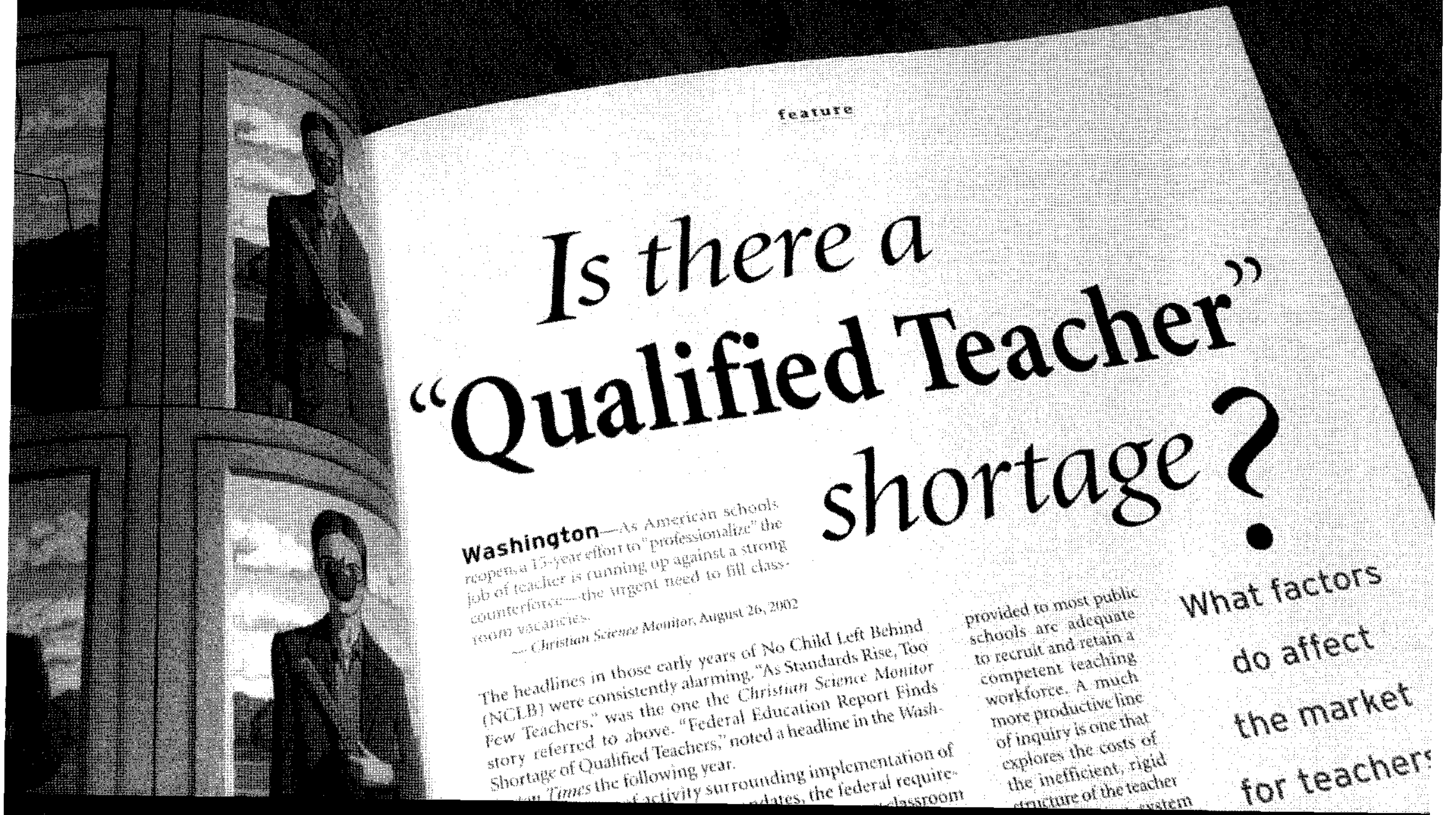
Inside Teacher Pensions, Election 2008, Missouri Tax Credits Debacle, What's Ahead for Charters, Teacher Values, Triage Accountability

CONTRIBUTORS: ROBERT COSTRELL, MICHAEL PODGURSKY, ANDY SMARICK, CHRISTOPHER LEHANE, DAVID WINSTON, ROBERT SLATER, WILBUR RICH, WILLIAM HOWELL, CHRISTOPHER BERRY, MATTHEW SPRINGER

Wonder what's happening in our schools?

Education Next gives you:

- Cutting-edge research by famous scholars
- Provocative features
- Honest exchanges of opinion
- Great graphics and engaging text



feature

Is there a "Qualified Teacher" shortage?

Washington—As American schools reopen, a 15-year effort to "professionalize" the job of teacher is running up against a strong counterforce—the urgent need to fill classroom vacancies.

—*Christian Science Monitor*, August 26, 2002

The headlines in those early years of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) were consistently alarming. "As Standards Rise, Too Few Teachers," was the one the *Christian Science Monitor* story referred to above. "Federal Education Report Finds Shortage of Qualified Teachers," noted a headline in the Washington *Times* the following year.

provided to most public schools are adequate to recruit and retain a competent teaching workforce. A much more productive line of inquiry is one that explores the costs of the inefficient, rigid structure of the teacher

What factors do affect the market for teachers

To subscribe visit **www.educationnext.org** or call **1-800-935-2882**

The Right Republican Strategy

BY DAVID WINSTON

> *"By...[selecting] the youths of genius from among the classes of the poor, we hope to avail the State of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use if not sought for and cultivated."*
>
> *—Thomas Jefferson, 1782*

> *"We need to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We must not tolerate a system that gives up on people."*
>
> *—George W. Bush, 2006*

Stronger accountability in service of world-class standards

Two presidents speaking 224 years apart declared the importance of challenging every American child to achieve the potential that lies within each of them. Education and the responsibility of our government to provide it have been part of the political debate since our nation's earliest days. At our founding, Jefferson argued that an educated citizenry would serve as the ultimate guardian against the threat of an oppressive government.

That remains true today. But the twenty-first-century global marketplace demands more of our education system. When President George W. Bush called upon our schools to "leave no child behind," he did so because he understands, like most people in this country, that a well-educated America is also an economically competitive America. In his sobering book, *The World Is Flat,* Thomas Friedman warns against assuming that "because America's economy has dominated the world for more than a century, it will and must always be" in the forefront. In fact, he calls the notion that America will forever be the economic powerhouse it is today a "dangerous illusion."

In today's Information Age, the ability to process knowledge and out-innovate the competition separates economic winners from losers. Education is the new capital and gives us that competitive edge. But by most measurements today, our schools, at best, get mediocre grades. In 2005, Achieve, Inc., a nonprofit, nonpartisan group concerned with preparing young people for work and college, released "Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?" College professors polled said that approximately half of all incoming students at their schools were not prepared to handle college-level math and writing. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently gave this critical assessment of our education system: "Education spending has steadily increased and rafts of well-intentioned school reforms have come and gone. But student achievement has remained stagnant, and our K–12 schools have stayed remarkably unchanged—preserving, as if in amber, the routines, culture, and operations of an obsolete 1930s manufacturing plant."

In today's Information Age, the ability to process knowledge and out-innovate the competition separates the economic winners from losers. Education is the new capital and gives us that competitive edge.

More and more Americans agree. A joint survey done by Peter Hart Research Associates and The Winston Group last year for the Educational Testing Service (ETS) found that Americans are worried our education system will be unable to meet the needs of the future and sustain the quality of life we enjoy today. People instinctively sense that our schools are not adequately preparing our children for the competitive world of the twenty-first century.

The Politics of Education

It is important, when looking at education through a political lens, to understand that it is far more than an issue. Education has morphed into something personal. For most Americans, it has become a basic value that defines, in part, who we are. For the poor it is the path out of poverty, for immigrants the chance to find freedom and opportunity. Education gives the middle class a shot at the brass ring, and for every parent, it fuels the hope that their children's lives will be better than their own.

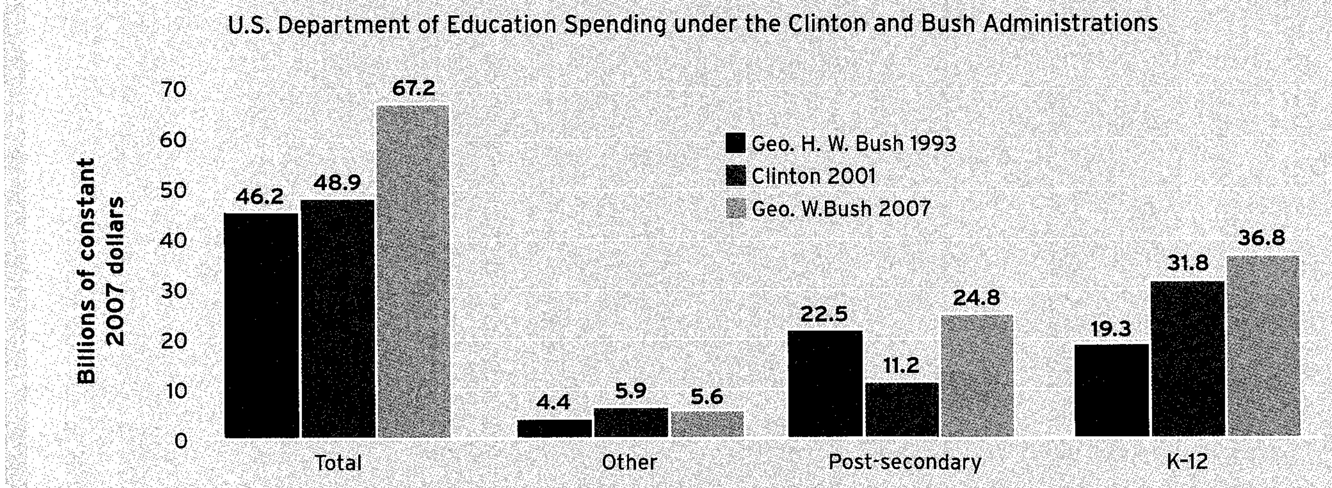
Because education has become such an intrinsic part of American life it may well have a decisive impact on the outcome of the 2008 presidential race, just as it did in 2000, the closest presidential election in recent history. That year, voters said in exit polls that education was the second most important factor in making their presidential choice, just slightly trailing the economy and jobs. This was a significant shift from 1996, when education tied for third place with the issue of the deficit, coming behind the economy and jobs and Medicare and Social Security. Among voters who said education was their top issue in 1996, Clinton beat Dole by a remarkable 62 points, 78 vs. 16 percent.

In 2000, however, George W. Bush and congressional Republicans structurally changed the education debate, as decades of Democratic education policies ran up against reality. Voters recognized that the education status quo was failing too many children. Bush and congressional Republicans called for an end to the "soft bigotry of low expectations" and a focus on achievement outcomes. Together, they pushed an education reform agenda, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), that emphasized higher standards and more accountability, a results-based approach that parents liked.

A majority of voters who cited education as their number-one concern in 2000 still pulled the lever for Democrat Al Gore. But in making education a focus of his campaign, Bush kept Gore's advantage on this important issue to only eight points, 52 vs. 44 percent. A number of issues and factors affected the outcome of that election, but the very closeness of the race made swing voters, for whom education is a top priority,

From Height to Height (Figure 1)

Federal spending on education rose during the Clinton years but increased even by more during the current Bush administration.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

particularly crucial. While Bush didn't win the "education vote," he closed the margin dramatically on this traditionally Democratic issue, especially with swing voters.

Since 9/11, education has taken a political back seat to national security and the economy. In 2004, education came in seventh on the list of voters' top issues in exit polls. In the 2006 congressional elections, exit polls didn't address the question of education at all. Still, private surveys showed that education was an important issue for many swing voter groups then and has remained remarkably steady over the past seven years. In a New Models survey conducted by the Winston Group in May 2007, married women with children, a key swing voter group, ranked education second in importance, only a single point behind defense and terrorism. In 2008, the same swing voter groups that played such a decisive role eight years before could again provide the margin of victory for the winning presidential candidate.

A Republican Education Agenda

Republicans have a significant opportunity in next year's election to win on the education issue by continuing their push for a reform-based education agenda and arguing against the idea that more money without real structural reform can fix the ills of our education system. For decades, Democrats have embraced the status quo, calling for increased federal spending as the solution to declining test scores and increasing numbers of students ill prepared for the future. Between 1980 and 2000, Department of Education (DOE) spending rose by a staggering 174 percent, from $14 billion to $38.4 billion, with little to show for it. The Democrats got what they wished for, but the bleak record of education achievement in the 1980s and 1990s shows their funding-based approach simply doesn't work. The central premise of the Democratic Party's education policy—that a lack of money is the problem with America's schools—has been debunked by years of negative student outcomes.

All of which explains why George W. Bush was able in the 2000 election to connect with voters on the education issue. When he spoke of "leaving no child behind," it resonated with parents who wanted a new approach to the challenges facing their children's schools. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act emphasized accountability, higher standards, parental involvement, and increased resources to help students and schools most in need. It took effect in January 2002 and put American education on a new course.

Stick With No Child Left Behind

Republicans can make a persuasive case that they have been the agents of real change in our schools. They should stick with the principles of the No Child Left Behind Act. The NCLB reauthorization debate will give Republicans an opportunity to contrast their approach of accountability, parental involvement, and targeted spending with the Democrats' traditional "show us the money" education policy.

Although in effect for a relatively short period of time, the programs mandated by NCLB are beginning to show results. The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Nation's Report Card, showed that nine-year-olds made "more progress in reading over the past five years than in the previous 28 years combined...and posted the best scores in math in the history of the report." The same tests showed that 13-year-olds had the "highest math scores ever recorded," which included all-time high scores for African American and Hispanic students. Other scores showed improvement in urban districts and in narrowing the gap between whites and minority children.

The vast majority of Americans, 76 percent, support reauthorization of NCLB, according to the ETS survey; parents of school-age children (K–12) favor reauthorization at an even higher rate. Even school teachers and administrators, some of the act's biggest critics, favor reauthorization by 75 percent and 78 percent, respectively, although with modifications.

At the heart of Republican education policy is a core belief: if we ask more of American students, they will produce more.

Yet it would be a mistake for Republicans to rest on NCLB's early gains. If all students are going to be achieving at grade level or better in reading and mathematics by 2014, progress must come faster. That will take some changes to the provisions. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings recognizes that fact. Talking about the NCLB reauthorization, she said, "we can use the knowledge we've gained to strengthen and improve the law...continuing the workable, common sense approach that we've developed together with states."

Demand Tougher Standards and Higher Expectations

Republicans should also argue that dramatically improving our schools may require a tougher attitude toward failure on the part of parents, teachers, and taxpayers. With countries like China and India focusing their education systems on preparing workers to compete against our children, the excuses that have kept our schools mediocre for years are no longer acceptable. Moving from 6 percent of Washington, D.C., 4th graders scoring proficient or advanced on the 2000 NAEP math test to 11 percent in 2005 is progress. But real achievement means no child scores below proficient. With America's economic future riding on our schools' ability to produce a competitive twenty-first-century workforce, "failure isn't an option."

That means setting world-class standards. But today we have a mishmash of state standards that often leave parents unable to assess the quality of their children's schools. What one state deems a high standard may appear low in another. If a standard is deficient and state tests are geared to it, schools will not see real achievement. Only when external tests such as NAEP expose failing students and schools will parents realize their state standards simply don't make the grade. But by then it may be too late for their children.

Implementing tougher standards has always been a Republican idea and will be again in 2008. At the heart of Republican education policy is a core belief: if we ask more of American students, they will produce more. The Republican agenda calls for higher expectations for students themselves. School systems must look critically at what is working and what is not working in their schools. That means putting money into initiatives that will bring achievement for all students: historically low performers, who must be able to compete in a world that demands higher skills; average students, who need to care more about their studies if they are going to succeed; and top students, who will drive the country's future innovations.

School choice, school vouchers, merit pay, teacher standards, and a raft of other education reforms are key elements of the Republican education agenda and in 2008 will once again offer voters innovative ideas to address our education challenges.

Reject the Traditional Funding Debate

Democrats reject most of these reforms out of hand, fearing the loss of political support from education special interests. Instead, as they have done in election after election, they will likely embrace an attack strategy decrying Republicans' "failure" to fund education.

The facts tell a different story. At the end of his second term, Bill Clinton signed a $42 billion DOE budget. All told, Clinton increased education spending by 6 percent ($2.7 billion using constant 2007 dollars) over his Republican predecessor, which earned him the praise and political support of the education establishment.

Under President George W. Bush, the 2007 DOE budget hit $67.4 billion. Bush increased education funding over Clinton by 38 percent (nearly $19 billion), yet Democrats tell the American people that education is underfunded (see Figure 1). This election, Republicans should dispel the Democratic myth because the education debate ought to focus on what's really important—the need for dramatic education reform based on student outcomes.

A Tough Question for '08

All of which brings us back to the core education question of the 2008 campaign, a question that deserves an answer from the men and women, Republican and Democratic, who aspire to lead this country:

As political leaders, how will you transform our schools from a model that tolerates failure and gauges success by the size of the school budget to an Information Age model that measures success by student achievement and ensures that every child can succeed in the global economy?

The full impact of an ineffective system of public education may not be evident for many years. But one day America will pay a heavy price for accepting and excusing mediocrity in our schools: generations of American children unprepared for the modern workplace.

In 2000, "education" voters said, "Stop processing students, stop looking at them as profit centers, and start preparing them for a tough, competitive world out there." Republicans listened, promised change, and put the country on a path of education reform. The 2008 election will determine whether the country continues down that path and is ready to compete in the future.

David Winston is the president and founder of The Winston Group, a Washington, D.C., survey research and strategic communications firm, and former director of planning for the Speaker of the House and senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION RESOURCE ORGANIZATION

The #1 Google website for alternative education, alternative schools

WWW.EducationRevolution.org

Education Revolution Magazine,
Free e-Newsletter,
Online Courses for school starters
Annual Conference: AEROconference.com,
Online Bookstore, and MORE

Alternative Education Resource Organization
417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2620
(800) 769-4171 (toll-free) | (516) 625-3257 (fax) | www.EducationRevolution.org

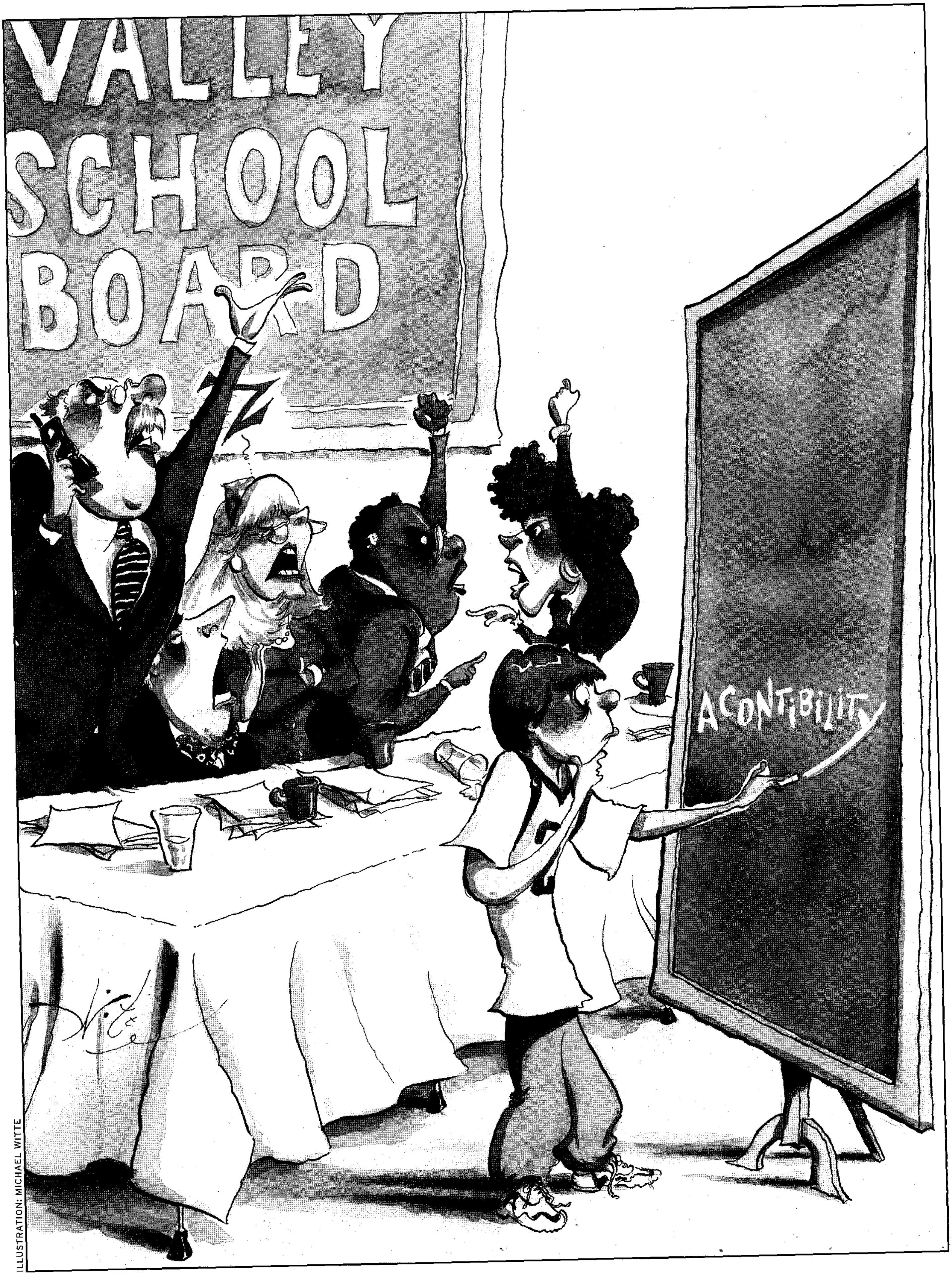

VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD
ACONTIBILITY

ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL WITTE

Accountability Lost

In school districts across the nation, voters elect fellow citizens to their local school boards and charge them with the core tasks of district management: hiring administrators, writing budgets, negotiating teacher contracts, and determining standards and curriculum, among them. Whatever the task, the basic purpose of all school board activities is to facilitate the day-to-day functioning of schools. If board members do their jobs well, schools should do a better job of educating students.

Not surprisingly, school board members agree that one of their most important goals is to help students learn. According to a 2002 national survey, student achievement ranks second only to financial concerns as school board members' highest priority. We wondered, though, do voters hold school board members accountable for the academic performance of the schools they oversee? Do they support sitting board members when published student test scores rise? Do they vote against members when schools and students struggle under their watch?

Existing accountability policies assume that they do: states shine light on school performance by providing the public with achievement data. Voters and parents are expected to make use of these data in choosing school districts or schools, and to hold administrators and school board members accountable for the schools' performance at each election. The idea is that voters will replace incumbents with new members when performance is poor and support incumbents over challengers when performance is strong. Indeed, there are very few other ways in which district officials can be held accountable for school performance. Neither the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) nor the states impose direct sanctions on members of school boards that oversee large numbers of underperforming schools.

Student learning is seldom a factor in school board elections

BY CHRISTOPHER R. BERRY AND WILLIAM G. HOWELL

Our questions led us to undertake the first large-scale study of how voters and candidates respond to student learning trends in school board elections. We analyzed test-score data and election results from 499 races over three election cycles in South Carolina to study whether voters punish and reward incumbent school board members on the basis of changes in student learning, as measured by standardized tests, in district schools. In addition, we assessed the impact of school performance on incumbents' decisions to seek reelection and potential challengers' decisions to join the race.

We found that in the 2000 elections, South Carolina voters did appear to evaluate school board members on the basis of student learning. Yet in the 2002 and 2004 elections, published test scores did not influence incumbents' electoral fortunes. As we'll see, the possible reasons our results differed so dramatically from one time period to the next hold important implications for the design of school accountability policies. But let's first take a closer look at our methods and findings.

South Carolina

Once we set out to study local school board races, we encountered tall hurdles to obtaining election results. Only one state, South Carolina, centrally collects precinct-level election data for school board races. In all other states, obtaining precinct-level election results requires gathering and organizing election returns from hundreds of individual counties and election districts.

So we took a close look at South Carolina. In most respects, South Carolina elections and school boards are similar to those across the rest of the country. All but 4 of the state's 46 counties hold nonpartisan school board elections. Approximately 80 percent of school board members receive some compensation, either a salary, per diem payments, or reimbursement for their expenses. Over 90 percent of South Carolina's 85 school boards have between 5 and 9 members, while the largest board has 11. And, as is common practice in other states, nearly 9 out of 10 South Carolina school districts hold board elections during the general election in November.

Only one state, South Carolina, centrally collects precinct-level election data for school board races.

Perhaps the most important difference between South Carolina and most other states when it comes to local school politics is the role played by the state's teachers unions, which are among the weakest in the country. In other states strong teachers unions may mobilize high turnout among members, their families, and friends, and punish and reward board members for their treatment of teachers rather than hold them accountable for student test scores. South Carolina school boards are unlikely to be beholden to the unions, which should make the boards more responsive to the broader public.

Roughly half of the state's 85 districts hold school board elections in any two-year election cycle. We collected precinct-level election returns for all school board races in three election cycles, 2000, 2002, and 2004. We also obtained school-level student achievement data from the South Carolina Department of Education. We began our analysis with 2000 because it was the first cycle of elections after South Carolina started administering the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) to students in grades 3 to 8 in 1999. These tests, based on the South Carolina Curriculum and Standards, are given in both reading and math. We averaged the reading and math percentile scores to produce a composite score for each school. Because we wanted to examine whether voters are more concerned with student performance districtwide or in their local neighborhood, we computed two measures of average school performance to include in our analysis. The first is the average test score for each district. The second is the average test score for the public school that is located closest to an election precinct.

Searching for Accountability

We began our analysis by comparing the vote shares of incumbent school board members who ran and faced an opponent with the test-score performance of the schools and districts they represented. We were careful to separate the effect of school performance from the effects of other factors that could reasonably influence an incumbent school board member's vote share. For example, we considered whether voters evaluate student outcomes relative to spending by measuring the effect of changes in the district's property tax rate. We also took into account features of the election, including whether it was held as part of the November general election or on another date, when turnout is likely to be lower. Additionally, we accounted for the partisanship of the electorate, measured by the Democratic candidate's share of the presidential vote, and demographic characteristics, such as race, age, and gender. We also adjusted for potential differences in how voters from precincts with higher and lower average test scores respond to changes in test scores. For example, voters from precincts with lower test scores might respond more strongly when test scores improve than do voters from precincts with test scores that already were very high.

In 2000, 67 incumbents from 37 school boards ran for reelection in contested races in South Carolina. Of these 67 incumbents, 50 were reelected, and the median vote share for all incumbents in competitive races was 58 percent.

We found that incumbent school board members won a larger share of the total vote in a precinct when test scores in that precinct improved. We estimate that improvement from the 25th to the 75th percentile of test-score change—that is, moving from a loss of 4 percentile points to a gain of 3.8 percentile points between 1999 and 2000—produced on average an increase of 3 percentage points in an incumbent's vote share. If precinct test scores dropped from the 75th to the 25th percentile of test-score change, the associated 3-percentage-point decrease in an incumbent's vote share could substantially erode an incumbent's margin of victory. In districts where percentile scores had increased in the year preceding the election, incumbents won 81 percent of the time in competitive elections; in districts where scores had declined, incumbents won only 69 percent of the time.

Voters were more concerned with school performance within their immediate neighborhood than across the district.

Citizens therefore did seem to base their assessment of incumbents on *changes* in test-score performance during a board member's tenure, exactly the type of accountability many supporters of NCLB had hoped for.

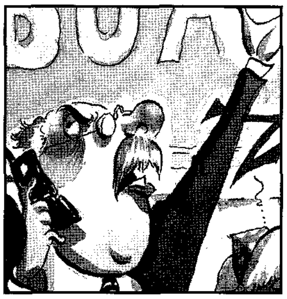
We were interested to find that the average school test score for the precinct, rather than the district, had a significant effect on an incumbent's vote share. The significant relationship with precinct test scores and the absence of a relationship with district scores suggests that voters were more concerned with school performance within their immediate neighborhood than across the district.

The Later Elections

With the evidence from 2000 in hand, we were initially surprised that all indications of a relationship between school performance and an incumbent school board member's vote share vanished after the passage of NCLB in 2002.

We reanalyzed the data in a number of different ways, but were unable to find any indication that voters cast their ballots based on changes in test scores. We included administrative data from teacher, parent, and student ratings of local schools; we considered the potential relationship between vote share and test-score changes over the previous two or three years; we examined the deviation of precinct test scores from district means; we looked at changes in the percentage of students who received failing scores on the PACT; we evaluated the relationship between vote share and the percentage change in the percentile scores rather than the raw percentile point changes; and we turned to alternative measures of student achievement, such as SAT scores, exit exams, and graduation rates. None of these approaches yielded clear evidence of a link between school performance and voter behavior in school board elections.

Even when we estimated the probability that an incumbent won a majority of the votes in each precinct, or accounted for test-score changes and levels as a function of dollars spent on students, or measured the relationship between an incumbent's vote share in one election and the previous election, the overwhelming weight of the evidence indicated that school board members were not being judged on improvement or weakening in school test scores.



We failed to find any indication that incumbents in 2002 and 2004 based their decisions about running for reelection on student learning trends.

Strategic Politicians

So far, we've discussed the experience of incumbents who ran against an opponent. Many incumbents, however, either did not run for reelection or ran unopposed. For example, in 2000, 42 of the 157 sitting board members in 39 school districts who were up for reelection did not run for office. Among the remaining 112 who sought to retain their seats, more than one-third, 45, did not face a challenger. The 67 incumbents who ran opposed in 2000 represented less than half of the sitting board members whose seats were in play that election.

School performance as measured by test scores may have helped determine which candidates sought reelection and which faced a challenger. If board members and potential challengers anticipate that voters will punish incumbents for poor school performance, declining test scores may lead board members to retire rather than endure defeat. A drop in test scores may also encourage opponents to run for office, either because they believe that incumbents are now vulnerable to defeat or because disgruntled citizens feel compelled to run for office when schools perform poorly.

Although exact election filing dates vary by school district, most candidates for seats on South Carolina's school boards must decide whether to run by mid-September for a November election. PACT scores, however, are typically released to the public in late September or early October. Incumbents and potential challengers may not know the exact size of precinct or district test-score changes, but they could very well have impressions of the direction and rate of student learning trends. School board members and some challengers have observed the schools firsthand and have listened to accounts from principals and teachers. By monitoring the coverage of education issues on local television and in the print media, candidates may also have a sense of the extent to which voters are likely to use student test-score performance to evaluate candidates. And although we do not know this with any certainty, it is possible that school board members have access to test-score results before they are released to the public.

We decided to assess the relationship between test-score trends and incumbents' decisions to run for reelection, and then to estimate the effect of test-score trends on the probability that an incumbent who runs faces an opponent. Our basic approach in this analysis was to compare the probability of running (or running and facing a challenger) between incumbents who oversaw districts with stronger and weaker year-over-year test scores. Because candidates either run for election in every precinct or do not run at all, we focused only on district test scores. As with our analysis of the relationship between test scores and vote share, we accounted for a number of factors that could reasonably influence a candidate's decision to run for office. These included the incumbent's vote share in the previous election, which might serve as a signal of the likelihood of victory to both the incumbent and potential challengers, and whether board members received compensation for their service, under the assumption that paid positions would be more attractive.

Our results indicate that incumbents may bow out in anticipation of being held accountable for poor test-score performance by schools in their district. During the 2000 election, incumbents were less likely to seek reelection when their district's test scores declined over the preceding school year. If a district experienced a drop from the 75th to the 25th percentile of test-score change, our results lead us to expect that incumbents will be 13 percentage points less likely to run for reelection. In fact, 76 percent of incumbents sought reelection in districts with improving test scores; in districts with falling scores, only 66 percent did. The results did not hold for the later elections.

Just as we found no evidence in the 2002 and 2004 elections that a large block of voters held incumbents accountable for poor test scores, we failed to find any indication that incumbents in 2002 and 2004 based their decisions about running for reelection on student learning trends.

When we looked at the behavior of the challengers, we once again saw evidence of their responding to test scores during the 2000 election, but no indication in 2002 or 2004 (see Figure 1). In 2000, a drop in test scores within the district significantly increased the likelihood an incumbent would face a challenger. If a district's test-score change fell in the 25th rather than the 75th percentile, we estimate that an incumbent experienced an 18-percentage-point increase in the probability of facing a challenger. On the ground, the data show that 74 percent of incumbents who ran for reelection in districts with declining scores faced a challenger; in districts with improving scores, only 49 percent of incumbents faced a challenger.

Variable Sunshine (Figure 1)

In 2000, student achievement had a pronounced impact on the electoral fortunes of school board members in South Carolina. However, by the 2002 and 2004 election cycles, public interest in student test scores had fallen off and student achievement had no effect on school board elections.

In South Carolina, did changes in the performance of the local schools affect…

	2000	2002	2004
the share of the vote earned by incumbents?	YES	NO	NO
the likelihood that a school board incumbent would run for reelection?	YES	NO	NO
the likelihood that an incumbent would face competition?	YES	NO	NO

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from data collected from South Carolina state departments and agencies

What Happened in 2000?

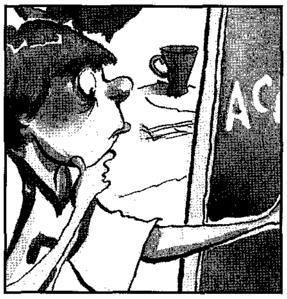
Why did voters, incumbents, and potential challengers care about test scores in 2000 but not in 2002, or in 2004? The most likely explanation involves changes in media coverage of education issues. The amount and content of media coverage of student test scores differed substantially between 2000 and the latter two election years.

The 2000 elections were the first to follow the passage of the state's accountability system. Journalists devoted ample space to issues that either directly or indirectly concerned student learning trends. Charleston's *Post and Courier*, the *Herald* in Rock Hill, Columbia's *The State*, and the *Associated Press State & Local Wire*, which serves numerous other South Carolina papers, regularly carried stories about the state of South Carolina's schools. Both incumbents and challengers frequently identified student achievement generally, and test scores in particular, as the single most important issue in the 2000 school board election. Newspaper editorials that endorsed candidates in the 2000 election regularly underscored ways in which individual incumbents and challengers did, or said they would, improve student achievement. And 45 percent of the newspaper articles about school board races in the two months prior to the election mentioned student test scores.

In the 2002 and 2004 elections, however, media coverage shifted to other issues, such as the closing of schools, the racial composition of schools and boards, disciplinary problems, and sports programs. In these years, only 30 and 34 percent of articles, respectively, touched on test scores. The decline in media attention leads us to suspect that concerns about student learning trends probably did not stand at the forefront of voters' or candidates' thinking in the 2002 and 2004 elections.

The tone of articles about the state's accountability system also shifted drastically during the 2002 and 2004 election cycles. From 1998 to 2000, most stories adopted a fairly neutral tone, introducing the public to the new accountability system and offering tepid praise and criticism of the testing regimen. After the 2000 election, journalists portrayed considerably more skepticism in their coverage of student achievement trends. Reporters devoted stories to errors in PACT's scoring, security breaches in school testing, flaws in the science and social studies portions of PACT, district efforts to get ahead by changing their test dates, confusion regarding the comparability of test scores over time, missing PACT scores, and conflicts between school evaluations under the state and national accountability systems.

At the same time that administrative irregularities and mishaps attracted public scrutiny, teachers, district officials, and various other interest groups began to challenge the value of standardized tests more generally. One 3rd-grade teacher was quoted as saying, "These tests cannot and never will truly measure what a child actually knows, how a child sees the world, what a child genuinely understands and grasps, and what kind of life that child lives outside the school walls." A school district associate superintendent claimed, "The problem with PACT is it doesn't tell you what your child knows and doesn't know." The Palmetto State Teachers Association questioned the value of the state's testing regimen, noting on its web site, "The current statewide tests do not provide immediate diagnostic information needed to improve student achievement or provide information to help teachers plan to meet the needs of each student. The testing process is time consuming, and spending weeks on high-stake testing is NOT in the best interest of children." And as Andrew HaLevi, the Charlestown County School District 2000 Teacher of the Year, wrote in a 2001 op-ed for the *Post and Courier*, "The PACT needs to be seen for what it is: a vehicle for politicians to say that they are tough on education (and educators). This may make for good politics, but it makes for bad educational policy." Reacting to the rising criticisms directed toward PACT, voters may have grown disenchanted with the state's accountability system and removed test-score performance from among the criteria on which they evaluated school board candidates.



Why did voters, incumbents, and potential challengers care about test scores in 2000 but not in 2002 or 2004?

There are, of course, several other plausible explanations for why South Carolinians voted based on test score performance in 2000 but not in 2002 and 2004. The timing of the public release of the test scores is one. The 2000 scores were released in late October, whereas scores in 2002 and 2004 were released in early October and early September, respectively. In 2000, the release of scores so close to the election date and the media coverage that followed may have primed voters to evaluate candidates on student test scores. In the other two election years, the gap of a month or two between the release of scores and election day may have allowed the issue of test scores to fade from voters' minds.

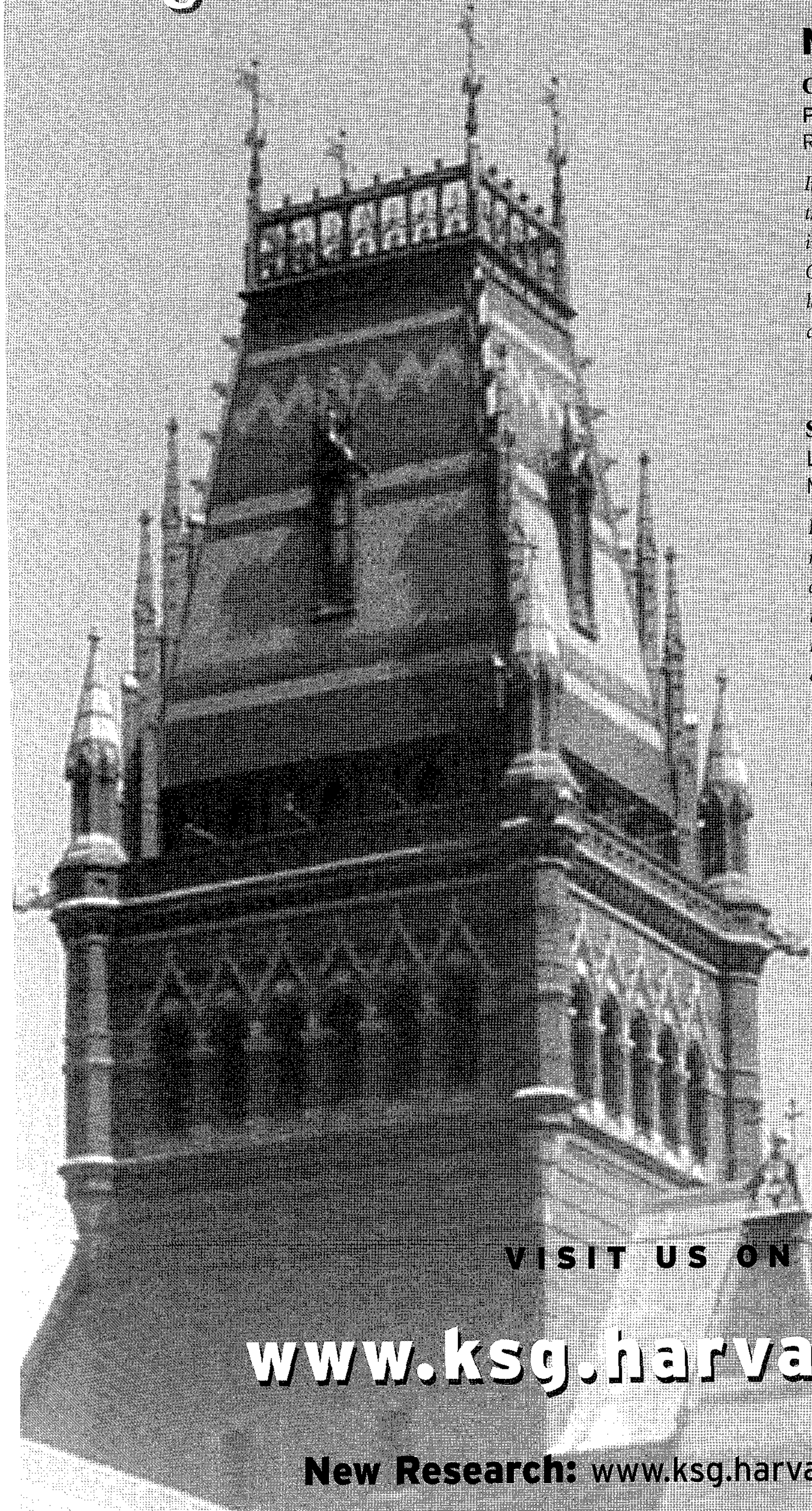
Another possibility is a major change in the reporting of test information. NCLB requires schools to notify parents directly about the performance of their schools. In 1999 and 2000, the first two years of PACT testing, scores were reported in their raw form in the materials that parents received. Beginning in 2001, official PACT reports to parents used a simpler rating scale that classified each school into one of five performance categories ranging from *unsatisfactory* to *excellent*. Under this scheme, almost every school received a rating of at least *average*. Indeed, a Department of Education news release in 2002 ran with the headline, "Schools receive higher Absolute ratings on report cards; 80% average or better." Although the raw scores were contained deeper in the reports, if most schools appeared to be average or better, parents may not have been prompted to hold incumbents accountable for poor school performance. Incumbents and potential challengers may also have become less responsive to scores when the testing regimen began to give nearly every school a passing mark.

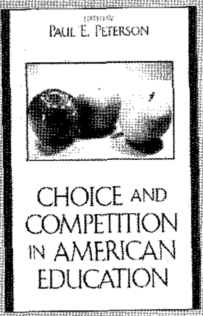
Implications for Policy

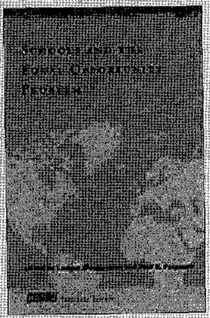
The evidence from South Carolina shows that voters do at least sometimes evaluate school board members on the basis of student learning trends as measured by average school test scores. Changes in average school test scores from year to year can affect the number of votes incumbents receive, the probabilities that they run for reelection, and the likelihood that they face competition when they do.

But the absence of a relationship between average school test scores and incumbents' electoral fortunes in the 2002 and 2004 school board elections raises important questions about the assumptions underlying accountability systems. School board elections give the public the leverage to improve their schools. If voters do not cast out incumbents when local school performance is poor, they forfeit that opportunity. As debate continues over components of NCLB, policymakers should consider whether it is realistic to assume voters will in fact use the polls to drive school improvement.

Christopher R. Berry is assistant professor at the Harris School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago, where William G. Howell is associate professor.







School Choice
INTERNATIONAL

Program on Education Policy & Governance

New Books

Choice and Competition in American Education
Paul E. Peterson, ed.
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005

In a group of essays originally published in Education Next, *this book examines the likely promise and pitfalls of introducing market concepts to American education. Overall, these essays paint the picture of an education landscape that will be greatly shaped by choice and competition in the 21st century.*

Schools and the Equal Opportunity Problem
Ludger Woessmann and Paul E. Peterson, eds.
MIT Press, 2007

Leading researchers from the United States and Europe report on new findings on the effect of education on equal opportunity, using economic and statistical techniques to assess the results of education policy reform in countries including the United States, Britain, Sweden, Germany, and Italy.

School Choice International
Rajashri Chakrabarti and Paul E. Peterson, eds.
MIT Press, 2008

Public-private partnerships in education policy play an important role in enhancing the supply as well as the quality of human capital. In recent years, there has been a burgeoning of public-private partnerships in different parts of the world. The essays in this volume study public-private partnerships in different parts of the world, such as the Americas, Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

VISIT US ON THE WEB

www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg

New Research: www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/research.htm

Program Events: www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/events.htm

Post Doctoral Opportunities: www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/postdoc.htm

HARVARD

PEPG

ILLUSTRATION: GREG CLARKE

Accountability Incentives

Do schools practice educational triage?

"Take out your classes' latest benchmark scores," the consultant told them, "and divide your students into three groups. Color the 'safe cases,' or kids who will definitely pass, green. Now, here's the most important part: identify the kids who are 'suitable cases for treatment.' Those are the ones who can pass with a little extra help. Color them yellow. Then, color the kids who have no chance of passing this year and the kids that don't count—the 'hopeless cases'—red. You should focus your attention on the yellow kids, the bubble kids. They'll give you the biggest return on your investment."

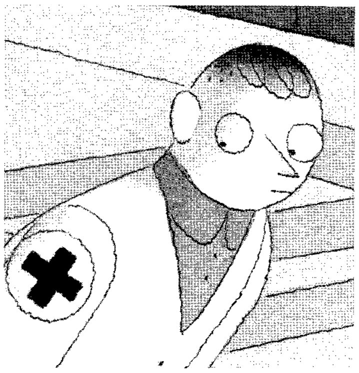
—Jennifer Booher-Jennings,
"Rationing Education in an Era of Accountability"
Phi Delta Kappan International (June 2006)

Increasingly frequent journalistic accounts report that schools are responding to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by engaging in what has come to be known as "educational triage." Although these accounts rely almost entirely on anecdotal evidence, the prospect is of real concern. The NCLB accountability system divides schools into those in which a sufficient number of students score at the proficient level or above on state tests to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks

BY MATTHEW G. SPRINGER

("make AYP") and those that fail to make AYP. The system gives no credit to schools for moving students closer to proficiency or for advancing already-proficient students. If schools intent on meeting minimum competency benchmarks practice educational triage, they dedicate a disproportionate amount of their limited resources to "bubble kids," students who might otherwise perform just below the proficiency threshold. While these marginally performing students are likely to benefit from increased attention, reallocation of instructional attention leads to a tradeoff whereby the achievement gains of the marginally performing students come at the expense of both the lowest- and highest-performing students.

With congressional proceedings on NCLB's reauthorization under way, the time is opportune to take a hard look at educational triage claims. If the current law's minimum competency standard produces gains among students near the proficiency threshold but disadvantages others, the rules of the accountability system need to be modified, perhaps to reward improvements across the entire achievement distribution.



When academic achievement is measured with test-score performance, the much-politicized argument that NCLB compromises the educational needs and opportunities of high-performing, academically accelerated students holds no water.

To search for evidence of educational triage, I analyzed three years of test-score and other data on 300,000 students in public schools in a western state. I found none. I concluded that these schools were not responding to NCLB by trading off achievement among students with different baseline levels. Rather, they were successful at raising the performance of students who were otherwise at risk of failing the state test without sacrificing the performance of lower- and higher-performing students. Even in failing schools, students above the proficiency threshold made gains that were greater than one would expect if schools were concentrating resources on students near the threshold. When academic achievement is measured with test-score performance in this state, the much-politicized argument that NCLB compromises the educational needs and opportunities of high-performing, academically accelerated students holds no water.

The State's Accountability Program

The U.S. Department of Education in 2003 approved the state's accountability plan, which was designed to meet federal guidelines and regulations associated with NCLB. The plan requires all public schools in the state to meet proficiency standards in math and reading for all students and for each of 10 student subgroups, and to test a minimum of 95 percent of students in each subgroup to avoid sanctions. The accountability program measures students' content knowledge and skills using an Internet-enabled testing system developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), a national nonprofit organization that provides assessment products and related services to school districts. NWEA compares spring assessment results to grade-specific benchmarks to gauge whether individual students, subgroups of students, and schools meet the state's proficiency standards.

The particular demographic characteristics of this state limit the generalizabilty of my findings to other, more demographically diverse states. The state is disproportionately white and rural, with much smaller than typical schools and districts. Approximately 83 percent of students are white, 12 percent are Hispanic, and the remaining 5 percent are black, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Native Alaskan. Roughly 40 percent of students were identified as economically disadvantaged based on their eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch. Schools that did not make AYP have a higher percentage of Hispanic students than schools that did (18 percent vs. 10 percent) and a higher percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (48 percent vs. 39 percent). Despite the disadvantage of atypical demographics, this state offered the unique advantage of being able to measure achievement gains within the same school year. The state tests each student twice per year, permitting for measurement of individual students' fall-to-spring test-score gains.

Data

Data in this study are from the NWEA Growth Research Database. Starting with the 2002–03 school year, NWEA administered tests in mathematics, reading, and language arts to more than 90 percent of the state's students. NWEA furnished fall and spring test scores for the first three years after enactment of the state's accountability program (2002–03 through 2004–05 school years) for students in grades 3 through 8. My analysis focuses on math scores. The statewide percentage of students scoring in the proficient and advanced categories in math has ranged from a low of 53 percent for 8th graders in 2003 to a high of 90 percent for 4th graders in 2005.

The NWEA data set also provides demographic information about students, including the student's grade in school, gender, race, ethnicity, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. School-level characteristics include school type and school size. Although NWEA gathers data for students in traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools, I limited the study to students enrolled in traditional public schools or public charter schools because private schools are not included in the state's accountability program. I removed from the study sample very small schools, those with fewer than 34 students being tested, given their systematically different treatment under the state's accountability system.

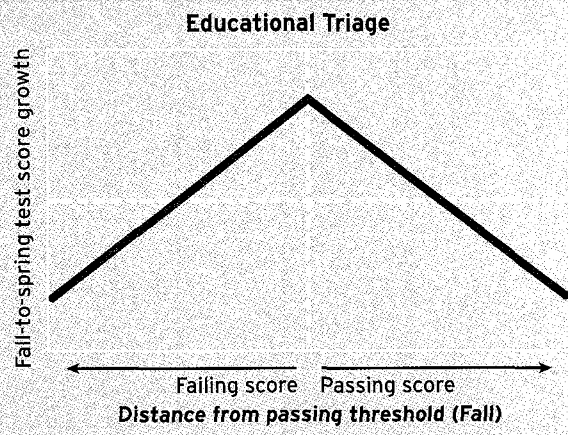
Identifying Educational Triage

My objective was to detect shifts in how schools committed resources to different students, resources such as textbooks and teachers, but also such inputs as teacher attention and choice of curriculum and instructional strategies. Obviously, no formal accounting system tracks the distribution of resources directed at individual students. So I turned to an indirect measure of resource allocation. I infer the priorities of administrators and teachers from educational outcomes, as measured by student performance on the state's math test. If there is a greater-than-expected increase in the achievement of students just below the state's proficiency standard, and this occurs in tandem with a less-than-expected increase in the achievement of high- and

Theory and Reality (Figure 1)

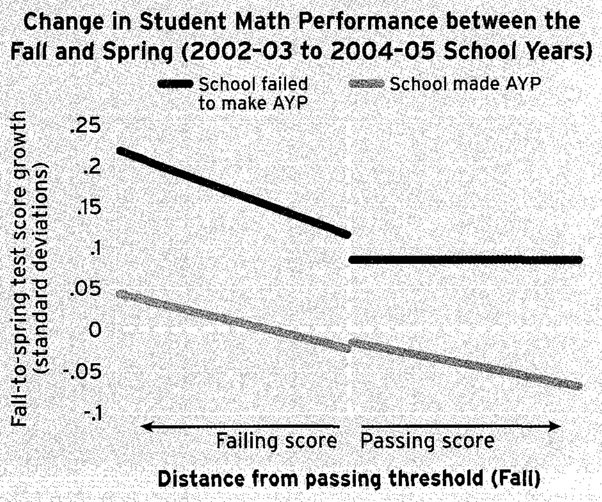
Media reports contend that No Child Left Behind has prompted schools to concentrate their resources on students whose test scores lie close to the passing threshold at the expense of the lowest- and highest-achieving students, which would yield test-score gains in the shape of the hypothetical plot below.

Figure 1a



My research shows that schools have not responded to NCLB's incentives with an educational triage strategy. Rather, Figure 1b shows that in both groups of schools the students who experienced the highest gains were those who had the lowest initial test scores.

Figure 1b



SOURCE: Authors' calculations

low-performing students, then I can conclude that educational triage has transpired.

My objective was to detect shifts in how schools committed resources to different students, resources such as textbooks and teachers, but also such inputs as teacher attention and choice of curriculum and instructional strategies.

Is it reasonable to expect administrators and teachers to be able to identify students who are likely to be on the cusp of the proficiency threshold at the spring test administration? When speaking of states that use NWEA assessments, the answer is yes. NWEA furnishes classroom teachers and building principals with proficiency reports for each student within days of the fall test administration. The reports include a projection of each student's performance on the spring test.

Consider a hypothetical example of the distribution of changes in test scores under educational triage. In Figure 1, the y-axis is the amount of growth in a student's test score from the fall to the spring test administration. The x-axis identifies a student's distance from the state-defined proficiency threshold. The vertical line in the middle of the graph is the threshold a student needs to cross to be considered proficient. The farther a student lies below the performance threshold in the fall, the more likely that student is to fail the spring assessment. The inverted "V" depicts the simplified pattern of gains one would expect to see if a school disproportionately targets resources, such as instructional time and teacher focus, to students particularly important to its accountability rating, that is, to students hovering around the state-defined proficiency threshold. If this practice were the case, the greatest fall-to-spring achievement gains would occur among students around the threshold, while other students would struggle to match expected test-score gains.

My basic strategy, then, was to compare fall-to-spring test-score changes among students who were expected to be either nearer or farther from the state-defined proficiency threshold following spring testing. A question of particular interest was whether schools that failed to make AYP in the previous school year responded strongly to the incentive to target instruction to students at risk of falling just short of the proficiency threshold.

Statistical Controls

The first step in my statistical analysis was to rank all the students within the same grade and year by their performance on the fall exam. I then divided the students into 20 groups of equal size and calculated a standardized test-score change for each student that measured their respective performance relative to students within the same performance group. Use of standardized test scores helps address what statisticians call reversion to the mean. When one takes repeated measures of some event or behavior, such as test-score performance among students, the measurements at the low and high ends of the resultant distribution tend over time to converge toward the average value for the population under study. With respect to students and test scores, reversion to the mean suggests that students with scores in the upper or lower tail of the test-score distribution are likely to perform closer to the average when tested more than once. This effect may mask a school's actual response to the threat of failing AYP by producing the illusion that schools are helping low-performing students while neglecting high-performing students. By comparing each student's gain to gains among students who performed at a similar level and would have experienced a similar, natural shift toward the average score, I can better separate legitimate test-score gains and losses from change associated with mean reversion.

I also made my best effort in the statistical analysis to isolate the change in test scores that could be attributed reasonably to the resources schools dedicate to teaching students.

Specifically, I separated out the effects on test-score gains of a student's race and ethnicity, as well as accounted for the influence of a student's peers, by evaluating the influence of demographic characteristics of the student body, including average income level and percentage of minority students. Given a large data set, I also was able to account for characteristics of schools that I could not directly measure but that might influence student achievement over the school year. Finally, I took precautions against shaping the results according to changes in test difficulty from year to year for each grade and for students in a given school.

Results

Despite many media claims of educational triage, I found no evidence of failing schools engaging in coordinated targeting of students near the state-defined proficiency threshold. In the state under study, public schools that had failed to make AYP focused instruction on the entire range of low-performing students in the subsequent school year, and did so without negative impact on high-performing students.

Figure 1b shows the changes in standardized test scores, across the full range of student performance, that can be attributed reasonably to teacher and school performance and to decisions about how the school allocates resources among students. In schools that failed to make AYP in the previous year, students who were expected to fall well below proficiency gained more than students nearest the proficiency threshold. The lowest-performing students gained about 0.20 standard deviations, roughly twice the improvement of those students whose expected gains were to leave them just below proficiency. Students expected to be proficient did not lose ground; the most advanced students performed comparably to other already-proficient students.

Despite many media claims of educational triage, I found no evidence of failing schools engaging in coordinated targeting of students near the state-defined proficiency threshold.

In schools that did make AYP, lower-performing students met expectations, with the largest of those gains coming from students expected to perform the weakest. It is interesting to note, in contrast, that higher-performing students in these schools lost ground from one year to the next. Remarkably, proficient students enrolled in failing schools experienced larger test-score gains than proficient students in nonfailing schools. Remember that these patterns of gains and losses would look much different if schools did indeed engage in educational triage. Under educational triage, students near the proficiency threshold would attain the largest gains, while students dispersed away from this threshold and toward the tails of the achievement distribution would suffer diminished performance.

Conclusion

Although there is no evidence that schools in the study sample targeted resources to particular students, they may have allocated resources toward outcomes measured by the accountability system. For instance, schools may have taught to the tests in math and reading while neglecting science, social studies, the arts, and physical education. The apparent absence of educational triage in one state does not invalidate documented accounts of the practice in particular schools, nor encroach upon other arguments to modify NCLB's proficiency-based school rating system. Nonetheless, as the reauthorization debate continues, policymakers should take note that educational triage was not evident in the first statewide analysis of the issue.

Matthew G. Springer is research assistant professor of public policy and education at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College and director of the federally funded National Center on Performance Incentives.

book review

Inside the Testing Factory

Some schools make it work

Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade

By Linda Perlstein

Henry Holt and Company, 2007, $25.00; 320 pages.

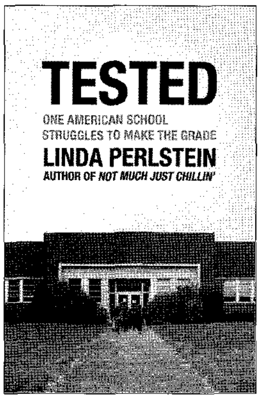
"It's Being Done": Academic Success in Unexpected Schools

By Karin Chenoweth

Harvard Education Press, 2007, $26.95; 238 pages.

As reviewed by Nathan Glazer

No Child Left Behind, aside from its other effects, has generated a new kind of "successful schools" book, one which looks at schools that have done better than expected on mandated state exams. Linda Perlstein spent five years writing on education for the *Washington Post* and decided to research one such school. Tyler Heights enrolls 300 students, kindergarten to 5th grade, in Annapolis, Maryland. Half of its students come from housing projects. It is just the sort of school it was hoped would be improved by the legislation. In 2000, only 17 percent of the children performed satisfactorily on a state exam. A new principal, the central figure in Perlstein's story, arrived that year. At the end of the 2004–05 school year, 86 percent of the students passed Maryland's test in reading, 92 percent passed in math; black and Hispanic students were almost up to those figures. What could explain such remarkable change, and could it be maintained? Pearlstein spent the following year studying the school. Its incredibly hard-working principal, often at the school from 6:30 AM to 10:30 PM, and its teachers hardly rested on their laurels. They focused all energies on the state tests to come in March.



Karin Chenoweth, another former *Post* reporter, took a different course in tracking school success in unlikely circumstances. She searched for schools that exceeded on state tests what was expected on the basis of their social composition. She reports on 14 such schools, elementary, middle, and high, scattered throughout the country. Of course her accounts cannot be as full or intensive as Linda Perlstein's study of a single school. One gets immersed in the life of Tyler Heights; there is no such effect possible from the brief studies in "*It's Being Done.*"

Is one reason for the success of schools with low-income children the quantity of resources that we may be able to invest in one public school? Astonishingly, for its 300 students, Tyler Heights had a staff of 43, only 18 of whom headed classes. Title I helped employ many of the additional specialized staff and also enabled acquisition of copious teaching aids and supplies, ordered in an end-of-the-fiscal-year rush. One wonders how typical this is. I note in a *New York Times* article that a failing Newark school of 487 students has a staff of 79, including 33 teachers, similar in student-to-staff ratio to Tyler Heights.

But as the Newark school demonstrates, such resources do not guarantee success. Most striking in the account of Tyler Heights is the detailed prescription of the curriculum and how it should be taught. A new superintendent had imposed Saxon Math and the Open Court reading curriculum on the Annapolis schools. The teachers—more than half are in their first or second year because the school loses so many each year—come in fresh and with great enthusiasm for ways of teaching they will not have a chance to exercise. Emissaries and consultants from the central office impose or propose ways of teaching. One introduces the teachers to "explicit instruction," weekly lessons completely orchestrated for the teacher, from what questions she should ask to what answers she should look for. "A line drawing of a bank teller popped up on the PowerPoint, and the presenter enthused, 'A bank teller could pick up the lesson immediately.'"

The principal mutters under her breath, "Why not just go and hire a bunch of bank tellers?" She had just spent the summer trying to get the most qualified and creative teachers to come to Tyler Heights.

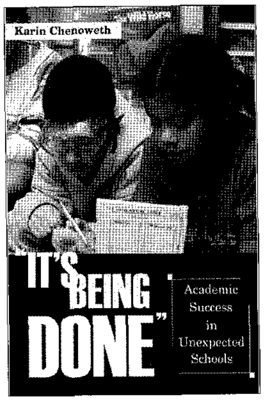
Finally, the tests are over (the results come months later), and Tyler Heights explodes into what the teachers and Ms. Perlstein believe to be real education—science and social science, arts and music, field trips. The kits they have ordered and never had a chance to use are opened. "It Feels Like a Different School" is the title of the chapter describing life after the tests.

In striking contrast is a school of similar social composition, successful on state tests, that Karin Chenoweth describes in "*It's Being Done.*" This school is also in a condition of post-exam-stress relaxation. The students mill around, the teachers are without energy, the principal—in contrast to the admirable principal of Tyler Heights—is not present. When she arrives, and Chenoweth joins her to visit classrooms, the classrooms are noisy, and the principal yells unprofessionally at disruptive students. She explains apologetically, "Once the state tests are done, we don't do a lot of instruction—we're doing field trips and getting ready for the end of the year."

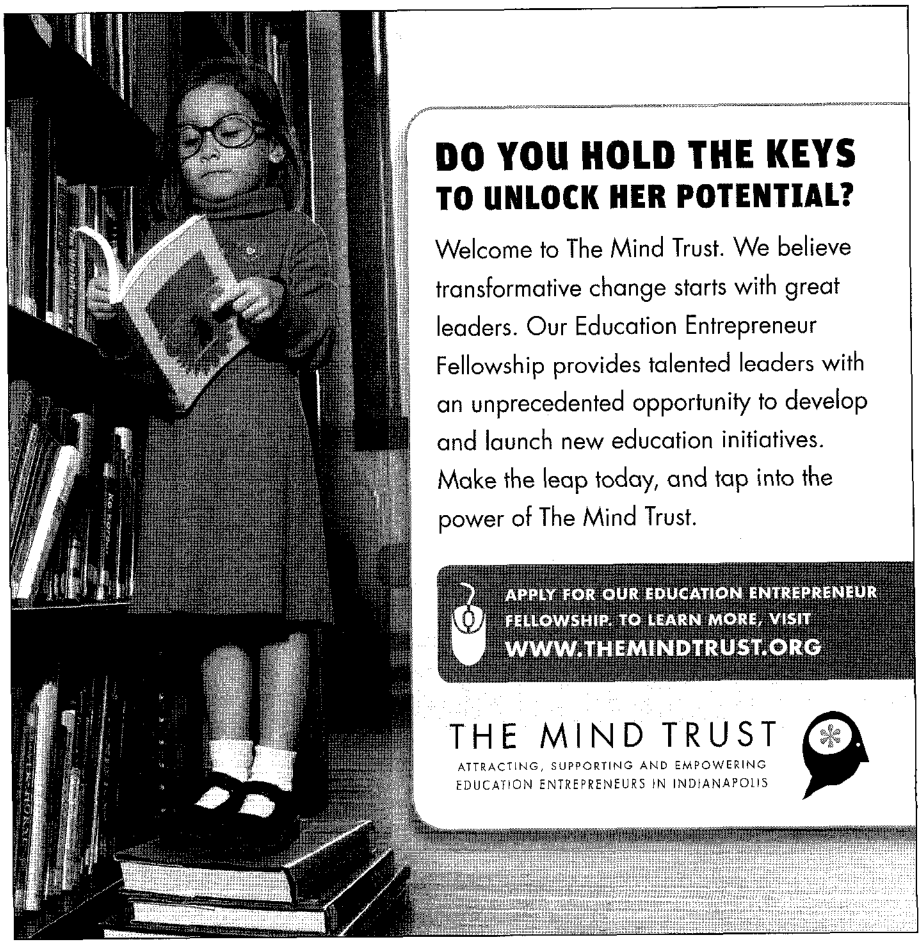
What explains the difference from Tyler Heights, with its high morale, despite being tightly run, and its joyful explosion in new educational possibilities after the mandated tests? Chenoweth suspects the high scores of the dysfunctional school she presents in contrast to her other successful schools "had not been attained in a legitimate way."

It is not clear what she has in mind. Actual cheating? The schools that have achieved their unexpectedly high scores in what she feels is a legitimate manner are so varied, in size, in region, in their approaches to curriculum and instruction, that it is not easy to extract general rules from her accounts. (Only one is an E. D. Hirsch Core Knowledge school.) The book does end with 26 generalizations, beginning with "They teach their students" and "They don't teach to the test," and ending with "To sum up: The adults in 'It's Being Done' schools expect their students to learn and they work hard to master the skills and knowledge necessary to teach those students." From my reading of the 14 case studies I would rate high the role of energetic and committed principals. But they don't show up in Chenoweth's list until item 17: "Principals are a constant presence."

I wonder what Chenoweth would think of Tyler Heights. It certainly "teaches to the test." It does expand into other kinds of activities when the tests are done, but its principal and its teachers seem steadily in control. The schools in Chenoweth's sample, from my reading, also take the tests very seriously. From the more detailed account of a single successful school in Linda Perlstein's book, and other accounts, one has the impression the teachers chafe under the requirements of the tests. But the tests are the coin of the realm: it is they that permit Chenoweth to select her school sample, and the results increasingly drive our judgment of schools. There is a lot of ideology in the criticism of the large role of tests. Yet I find it troubling that the judgment of so many teachers is that the tests distort what they feel they should be doing and ideally what the schools should be doing. Would better tests—perhaps those tracking the child rather than the grade or the school, as have been proposed—help resolve this conflict? They might. But if our most creative teachers do not seem to be enamored of the testing regime that now dominates the schools, this is something that needs further and systematic exploration, beyond even excellent ethnographic and journalistic accounts.



Nathan Glazer is professor emeritus of education and sociology at Harvard University.


DO YOU HOLD THE KEYS TO UNLOCK HER POTENTIAL?

Welcome to The Mind Trust. We believe transformative change starts with great leaders. Our Education Entrepreneur Fellowship provides talented leaders with an unprecedented opportunity to develop and launch new education initiatives. Make the leap today, and tap into the power of The Mind Trust.

APPLY FOR OUR EDUCATION ENTREPRENEUR FELLOWSHIP. TO LEARN MORE, VISIT WWW.THEMINDTRUST.ORG

THE MIND TRUST
ATTRACTING, SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIANAPOLIS

book review

Creativity Rising

Fewer slide rules, more paint brushes

A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future

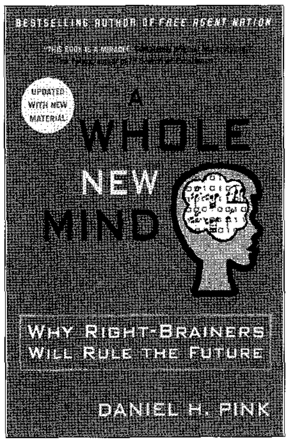
By Daniel H. Pink

Riverside Books, 2006 (Revised edition, paper), $15.00; 275 pages.

As reviewed by Mark Bauerlein

Readers of *Education Next* have probably observed the oscillation that music, dance, theater, and visual arts teachers suffer in their professional lives. At one pole, they love their material, and recounting what the arts do for young minds sends them into effusive testimonials to the unique powers of their disciplines. At the other pole, they regret the marginal place of the arts in the curriculum. With employers demanding better workplace skills from recent graduates, they say, and No Child Left Behind pushing reading and math, the arts scramble to maintain a foothold in the school week. Those are the dominant themes—a practice that sparks creative and disaffected kids, and a system that shunts it aside.

The situation leaves arts educators ever on the lookout for help. Howard Gardner has bolstered them for decades, his theory of multiple intelligences granting the arts a special role in the education of the whole mind. A few years ago, economist Richard Florida argued that demographic and technological factors have produced a "creative class" of artists, writers, and designers, and also software developers, media entrepreneurs, and hip capitalists. This creative class, he maintained, provides the energy to foster urban renewal and growth. Cities that invested in the arts, bike paths, architecture, etc., thrived throughout the 1990s, and other cities better do the same if they want to survive, Florida warned.


BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF FREE AGENT NATION
UPDATED WITH NEW MATERIAL
A WHOLE NEW MIND
WHY RIGHT-BRAINERS WILL RULE THE FUTURE
DANIEL H. PINK

Now comes another theorist who has captured the enthusiasm of arts educators. Daniel Pink is a business/technology writer who two years ago proclaimed in "Revenge of the Right Brain" (*Wired*, February 2005) that a sweeping paradigm shift was under way. Pink phrased it in capital-letter terms: the Information Age of the 1990s rewarded "linear, logical, analytical talents measured by SATs and deployed by CPAs," but we have entered a new epoch, the Conceptual Age, whose economy runs on "inventive, empathic abilities." The skills of computing, calculating, diagnostics, and basic legal work are losing their value in the United States. They retain their importance, Pink assures, but any activity that can be reduced to rules and instructions will go into a software program, such as TurboTax®, replacing tax accountants, or end up "migrating across the oceans" to India and China.

The two forces he labels "Asia" and "Automation" have changed the U.S. job market forever, pushing domestic labor into more creative practices. Another one, "Abundance," adds a consumer factor to the evolution. In the last 30 years, Pink says, wealth has spread and deepened. Life is good, and "the information economy has produced a standard of living that would have been unfathomable in our grandparents' youth." With material needs met, people want more than functionality from their goods. They want pleasing aesthetics, and they elevate "less rational sensibilities—beauty, spirituality, emotion."

It's a Big Idea, this epochal transition from Information Age to Conceptual Age, and the analysis of it could lead into demographic, financial, and geopolitical fields. In *A Whole New Mind*, Pink tracks it down to a smaller but still central terrain, the individual mind. For the transformations in jobs and goods, he claims, have a complement in the physiology of the brain, and in the styles of cognition that go with it. The Information Age solicits the powers of the left hemisphere, the aptitudes of analysis and numeracy and information management. The Conceptual Age solicits the powers of the right hemisphere, aptitudes of imagination, invention, and empathy. The left side, L-thinking, deals in pieces and series, while R-thinking makes pictures and discerns patterns. L-thinking breaks things down into parts. R-thinking assembles them into wholes. L-thinking conceives things by how they work, R-thinking by how they give pleasure and are meaningful. L-thinking fits a data-oriented economy, R-thinking an idea-oriented one.

That we have entered the latter condition Pink treats as plain. The example of Target stores proves the ascendancy, as it hires world-class designers to provide sleek toilet brushes and cool wastebaskets for budget-conscious consumers. But a problem lingers, he says: Information Age habits and assumptions remain in force. Information Age skills have served so well and yielded so much well-being that people don't realize the conversion in process.

Pink's book is an announcement of the turn, and an advice manual. The paradigm shift he takes care of in 60 pages, then devotes six chapters to ways of developing "a whole new mind." Each chapter covers a new "sense" in a nomenclature that will thrill arts educators: Design, Story, Symphony, Empathy, Play, Meaning. Design adds beauty to function, Story adds drama to argument, Meaning adds, well, meaning to material plenty, etc. Pink supplies concrete tips for joining the movement: "Keep a Design Notebook," he counsels, and "When you see a great design, make a note of it." To cultivate empathy, eavesdrop on conversations and try to feel the others' feelings. To deepen the sense of play, join online communities for gamers, or dissect a joke. Take an acting class, read *Powers of Ten* by Charles and Ray Eames, and learn to draw on the right side of the brain.

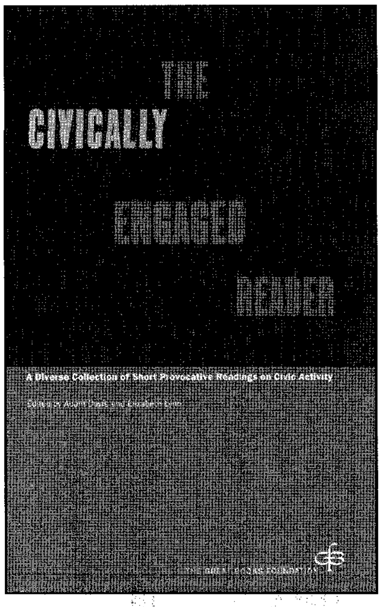
But while the case for arts programs in the Conceptual Age might seem logical, educators should proceed cautiously. For one thing, whether such creative, higher-order skills of the Conceptual Age can prosper without lower-order aptitudes being mastered first is a debatable proposition. I've seen too many students being told that "critical thinking" and "meaning-making" activities are the talents they should master, even though they struggle with algebra, misplace commas, and commit basic fallacies. Second, perhaps artistic geniuses can get by without learning to spell or multiply, but the rest better learn the fundamentals. Target isn't hiring thousands of designers for its goods. It hires "titans such as Karim Rashid and Philippe Starck." Besides, the outsourcing trend may be exaggerated. For instance, the number of highly skilled industrial jobs in the United States jumped by 36 percent from 1983 to 2002, and cities such as Dubuque, Iowa; Grand Forks, North Dakota; Charleston, South Carolina; and Savannah, Georgia, have become sizzling economies for skilled blue-collar workers (see "The Myth of Deindustrialization," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 Aug 2007).

As with any paradigm assertion, larger questions arise, especially in this case, the tempo implied. The Industrial Revolution took decades to happen. The subsequent Industrial Age lasted a couple of centuries before the Digital Revolution arrived 20 years ago. According to Pink, the Information Age has already petered out, at least in the United States. Has the lifetime of ages so contracted that before most people adjust to them they have already ended? Can human beings and human societies change that quickly?

Most of all, are students ready for right-brain conceptualization when only 23 percent of 12th graders reach "proficiency" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress math exam, 35 percent on the reading exam, and 13 percent on the U.S. history exam? For now, keep them on grammar and long division. Ten years from today, *A Whole New Mind* will join the long list of futurist visions that had its moment and disappeared.

Mark Bauerlein is professor of English and director of the Program in Democracy and Citizenship at Emory University.

Want to bring more *learning* to your service learning program?


THE
CIVICALLY
ENGAGED
READER
A Diverse Collection of Short Provocative Readings on Civic Activity
Edited by Adam Davis and Elizabeth Lynn
THE GREAT BOOKS FOUNDATION

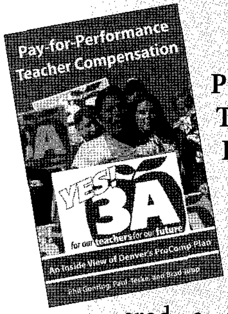
The Civically Engaged Reader is a ready-to-use resource for service learning and volunteer programs whose students want to better understand the meaning of—and motivations for—their service.

Designed to provoke discussion and reflection, *The Civically Engaged Reader* contains:

- Forty-seven provocative readings by a diverse group of authors ranging from Aristotle to Dave Eggers, Maimonides to Toni Morrison
- Introductory essays on associating, serving, giving, and leading
- Discussion questions and tips to help groups read and reflect on civic activity

For more information or to order copies of *The Civically Engaged Reader*, visit the Great Books Foundation online at www.greatbooks.org/civics or call 800-222-5870.

BOOK ALERT

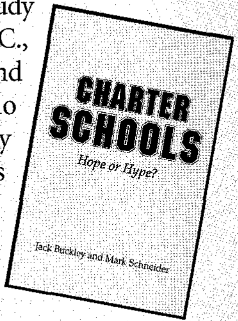

Pay-for-Performance Teacher Compensation
YES! 3A
An Inside View of Denver's ProComp Plan

Pay-for-Performance Teacher Compensation: An Inside View of Denver's ProComp Plan. Phil Gonring, Paul Teske, and Brad Jupp (Harvard Education Press).

The authors have delivered a straight-shooting, inside account of the design, politics, and implementation of the much-discussed Denver ProComp teacher pay plan—a plan the *Denver Post* termed "the nation's most ambitious." Widely regarded as the most substantial departure to date from the traditional "step-and-lane" pay scale, the "Professional Compensation plan for teachers" required Denver's teachers to vote for a new pay model and local voters to boost taxes by $25 million annually to fund the program. How the plan's champions won these two unlikely victories forms the backbone of the tale. The book first recounts the technical challenges in reforming teacher pay and the reasons for teacher resistance, then how trial and error, tough negotiation, and assiduous efforts to win hearts and minds convinced teachers to endorse the plan in 2004. Opening with a broad discussion of the case for reforming teacher pay and closing with some reflections on what has been learned thus far, the narrative is detailed, pithy, and highly readable. The volume obviously benefits from the contribution of Brad Jupp, a former Denver Classroom Teachers Association official and a maverick who played a key role in crafting ProComp.

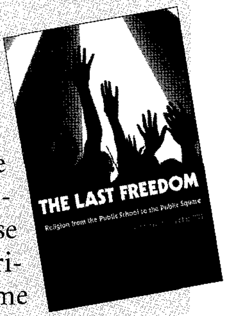
Charter Schools: Hope or Hype? Jack Buckley and Mark Schneider (Princeton University Press).

Long before becoming commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, Mark Schneider had embarked with his current deputy, Jack Buckley, on this ambitious, multiyear study of Washington, D.C., charter schools and the families who attend them. They surveyed parents from both charter and traditional public schools on four occasions between 2001 and 2004 and launched an innovative web site that allowed them to track the search behavior of parents seeking out school options. Although they find modest advantages for charters in terms of parental satisfaction, school-based social capital, and civic instruction, they emphasize that these differences—some of which diminished over time—fall well short of the promises made by the charter movement's most ardent supporters. They also note that parents devoted as much time online to learning about the racial composition of schools as about student achievement. Overall, this is a careful, balanced analysis of a unique new data set on charter schools from a city in which they have made considerable headway. It is unlikely to change anyone's opinion about charter schooling's potential as a reform strategy, however, not least because of the lack of information about student achievement.



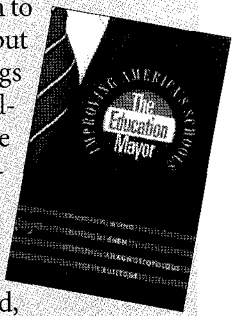
The Last Freedom: Religion from the Public School to the Public Square. Joseph P. Viteritti (Princeton University Press).

Joe Viteritti's new book is a fresh take on what might at first seem to be a tired topic: the role of religion in America and the state of religious freedom. The author's bold claim is that a prejudice against religious belief has become legitimized in American life and that those who take religion seriously have become increasingly vulnerable. Many of the controversies explored in this book involve education, and Viteritti makes a strong case for resisting the urge to drive religion from the public (school) square, for allowing religious institutions to perform some public functions, and for granting deeply religious parents greater accommodations when their children attend public schools.



The Education Mayor: Improving America's Schools. Kenneth K. Wong, Francis X. Shen, Dorothea Anagnostopolous, and Stacey Rutledge (Georgetown University Press).

The prose in this volume will appeal more to the citation-enthralled political scientist than to the informed citizen, but the study itself brings together the best available evidence on the consequences of mayoral efforts to reform big-city school systems. Wong and his colleagues make a solid, if still preliminary, case for shifting power away from school boards to a single, elected leader who can be held accountable to a citywide constituency. Combining anecdotal material with quantifiable data from a nationwide sample of large cities, they find positive impacts on both school management and elementary school achievement.



Smarter and Wiser

Fox TV show doesn't get it

As reviewed by David Steiner

Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader?

The Fox Broadcasting game show *Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader?* last February delivered the highest viewership for a series premiere on any network in nearly nine years, according to preliminary data released by Nielsen Media Research.

"Name the god who raised the storm that sent Odysseus over the side." The adult contestant starts to perspire, then makes self-deprecating remarks, only to be interrupted by the game-show host: "Can't quite remember—well cheat: ask a 5th grader." The child's response is…"Poseidon." "She's right—and you're richer by $250,000! Now, for half a million dollars: "Do polar bears eat penguins?"

The first question is my own; the sequence and second question are taken from the Fox game show I watched at the behest of *Education Next.* I cannot do better than quote the admirably sober summary of the show in Wikipedia:

> *Content is taken from elementary school textbooks, two from each grade level between first and fifth. Each correct answer increases the amount of money the player banks; a maximum cash prize of $1,000,000 can be won. Along the way, the player can be assisted by a "classmate," one of five cast members (who are fifth grade students), in answering the questions.*

A search on Google indicates that across the country, 5th graders regard it as hilarious to watch their parents squirm: Quick—what is the most common element in the earth's atmosphere? Oxygen? Wrong! (I leave it to any embarrassed readers to ask the nearest child for the correct answer.)

The reason adults can embarrass themselves in these quiz shows has less to do with their schooling than the fact that most have not used 5th-grade facts in many years. In response to a report from Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn that most American 17-year-olds have deep deficits in historical knowledge, Benjamin Barber sardonically proposed a multiple-choice test for 47-year-olds: his point was that both we and our teenage children would do well on items of immediate social, cultural, and economic relevance and poorly on the rest. A sample: "Book publishers are financially rewarded today for publishing (a) cookbooks (b) cat books (c) how-to books (d) popular potboilers (e) critical editions of Immanuel Kant's early writings. For extra credit, name the ten living poets who most influenced your life, and recite a favorite stanza. Well, then, never mind the stanza, just name the poets. Okay, not ten, just five. Two? So, who's your favorite running back?"

To be educated is not to win a contest for remembering factoids. The Fox show's banal humor hides the sad truth that our children are too often deprived of the experience of immersing themselves, losing themselves in creations of complexity, imagination, and beauty. Knowing that Poseidon was a god in ancient Greek literature is surely useless in promoting economic well-being or the capacity to participate in civic life. The same is true of having studied this passage from Homer:

> *Poseidon, the earth-shaker, made to rise up a great wave, dread and grievous, arching over from above, and drove it upon him. And as when a strong wind tosses a heap of straw that is dry, and some it scatters here, some there, even so the wave scattered the long timbers of the raft.*

And then recognizing in these lines from Virgil a lovely yet self-consciously derivative evocation:

> *Baleful Juno in her sleepless rage [summoned] a howling gust from due north [that] took the sail aback and lifted wave top from heaven, oars were snapped in two…over her flank and deck a mountain of grey sea crashed in tons.*

But to have these verses as constant companions is to know something a 5th grader does not: to hold beauty in the mind, and to swirl it in the glass of delight.

David Steiner is dean of the School of Education at Hunter College, CUNY. He is former director of arts education at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C.

Let's Talk About It

Talk radio's take on K–12 education

BY MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

This past June, with the immigration reform bill under attack from the Republican Party's conservative base, Senate Minority Whip Trent Lott complained that "talk radio is running the country." Judging by current trends, he might be right. According to a 2006 study by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 20 percent of Americans regularly listen to political call-in shows, up from 13 percent in 1996. Seventeen percent report listening regularly to National Public Radio, up four points from 1996. Meanwhile, newspaper audiences are shrinking, with daily readership down 10 points from 1996 to 2006, from 50 percent to 40 percent of the population.

This shift could have big implications for public policy debates, including those regarding education. A segment on the *Rush Limbaugh Show* (the nation's most popular, with 13.5 million weekly listeners) apparently reaches more people than an op-ed in the *New York Times* (with a daily print circulation of 1.1 million, and a *monthly* online readership of 12 million). Of course, this assumes that radio shows talk about education. But do they?

Limbaugh's treatment of education was mostly as you might expect, with several segments focused on "culture wars" issues rather than weighty policy debates.

The short answer is yes, but not much. Consider *Rush.* Its online archives only allow searches going back a month, so my summer research intern scoured the July 2007 programs for any discussion of K–12 education. The topic came up a paltry five times, versus hours of airtime for the Iraq war and immigration.

Limbaugh's treatment of education was mostly as you might expect, with several segments focused on "culture wars" issues rather than weighty policy debates. For instance, one day he interviewed a 13-year-old who doubts that global warming is man-made, even though his teacher taught him that it is; another day the host ranted about Democrats' support for sex education for kindergartners.

Still, some of his monologues hinted at core education debates. For example, a teacher called in to argue that we shouldn't try to produce a nation of "Einsteins," that we'll always need bricklayers and so forth. Limbaugh responded, "A lot of people that are out laying bricks or whatever the manual labor you're talking about, building roads and so forth, a lot of them got decent math scores when they were in school. It was required. It was called well-rounded education."

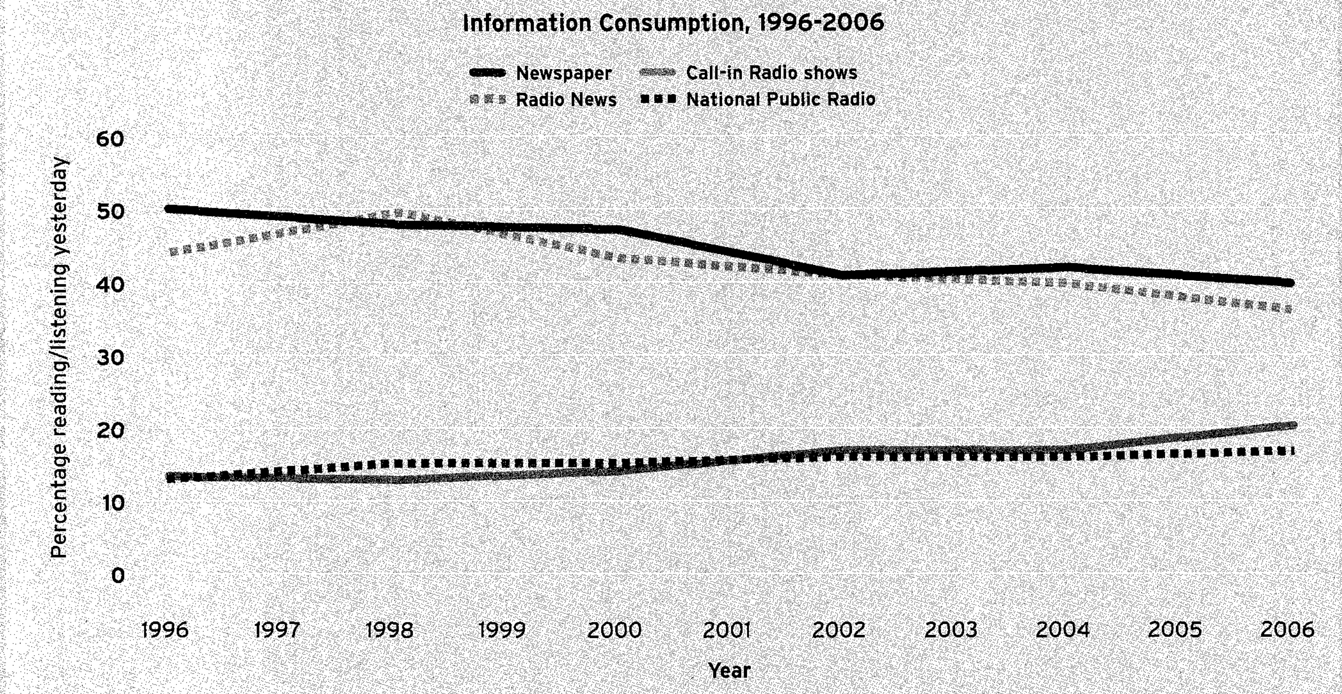
On the same day, he ridiculed the Pittsburgh school system for dropping the word "Public" from its name. "Let me tell you people in Pittsburgh something. It has nothing to do with what you call it! Gee! It's called results! You just have to marvel at bureaucrats in the way they tackle a problem—they don't fix the problem. They fix a name—that may get rid of the bad image—but it doesn't fix the problem."

And on another day, he attacked Hillary Clinton's preschool proposal: "Now, what you have to remember about this, she's saying that the government should take over small, independent preschools. What are small, independent preschools? They are independent and private businesses. A preschool is a private business. You send your kid to a preschool that's not part of the state education system, and you're paying for it, you obviously know you're sending your kid to a private business. Hillary Clinton wants to come in and essentially nationalize them all, under state control. I'm telling you, these people, if they get power, if they win the White House, the first thing that they're going to do is go after and outlaw home schooling. It's going to happen so fast it will curl your hair."

How does this compare to the other side of the dial—and the other side of the ideological spectrum—on National Public Radio? Consider Neal Conan's *Talk of the Nation,* the most popular call-in news show on NPR. Including comments

Talkin' Trends (Figure 1)

Over the past decade, talk radio and National Public Radio listeners increased as consumption of more traditional news sources declined.



SOURCE: Pew Research Center for People and the Press

from listeners, it handled education just eight times during July 2007, hardly better than *Rush*.

Most surprisingly, its coverage wasn't terribly different. Examining shows from August 2006 to July 2007, we spotted a handful that would appeal to policy wonks (such as one on mayoral control, and another on the "future of science education"). But most of its education segments focused on hot-button kitchen-table issues. Contemplate these titles of *Talk of the Nation* shows: "'Unhooked' Author Warns Against 'Hooking Up'"; "Does Zero Tolerance Make Sense for Toy Guns?"; Schools and Childhood Obesity"; and "Parent Sues School Over Student's Poor Grades."

Surprisingly, NPR's coverage wasn't terribly different. Most of its education segments focused on hot-button kitchen-table issues.

What's the lesson? While talk radio rarely wades into the minutiae of education policymaking—in part because education isn't high on the public's agenda right now—those of us concerned with school reform ignore this medium at our peril. All policies, to stand the test of time, must connect with a citizenry's core values, and these values are increasingly reflected (and shaped) by talk radio. Limbaugh might not mention "universal proficiency," and Conan might not take up "persistently dangerous schools," but by discussing a bricklayer's need to know math, or the appropriate discipline for students bringing toy guns to school, they are laying the foundation for the policy debates we wonks find so riveting. ■

Campaign 101

Make charters a political advantage

BY EMBER REICHGOTT JUNGE

When I jumped into the five-month Democratic primary for Minnesota's Fifth District congressional seat in 2006 after the sudden retirement of U.S. Representative Martin Sabo, I thought my history as state senate author of public charter school and open enrollment legislation could be an asset. After all, charter schools are a cutting-edge education opportunity popular with parents in more than 40 states.

Shape the charter school issue; don't retreat from it.

Winning the primary was tantamount to winning the general election in the highly Democratic district. The Fifth District was home to more than 20 charter schools serving thousands of families in Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs. Imagine their power at the polls in a low-turnout primary election!

We were also realistic: the district was one of the ten most liberal in the country. Had nearly 14 years of charter school experience in Minnesota moved them from lightning rod to mainstream in the education debate?

I did not prevail in the primary election. The new congressman, Keith Ellison, was endorsed by labor and the Democratic Party and favored by the teachers union. On the campaign trail, Ellison spoke against public charter schools and private school vouchers, casting them both as a Bush administration plan to weaken public schools.

It's no surprise that pro-charter Democratic candidates struggle so much around the country. Consider the results of polling we commissioned early in the campaign. This message garnered the most negative reaction from likely Democratic primary voters: "The candidate sponsored charter schools, which take away significant funding from public schools."

We adopted a plan to confront the problem: 1) raise more funds than opponents, and 2) organize the charter community.

We took the fundraising lead early. Bipartisan charter friends around the country contributed to my campaign. Ironically, several prospective donors declined because charter school issues were not featured enough in my education platform.

In June, we set out to organize charter school families. Though we invested significant staff time, it was difficult to reach these voters during the summer for a September 12 primary. Many were new Americans who had never voted before. Local charter school leaders were supportive, but their naiveté about the political process stood in sharp contrast to the strategic organizing in the labor community.

Five days before the primary election, the local teachers union sent out a mailing to likely primary voters describing me as "no friend of public education," though I was endorsed by the union in four prior legislative campaigns. The attack dropped my support numbers significantly in one day.

Of course, this issue was just one of several factors shaping the outcome of the primary race. But my campaign erred in not being more prepared to respond on the charter school issue. Here are lessons learned for future candidates and the charter community:

- Shape the charter school issue; don't retreat from it. Make it part of an overall education agenda, reinforcing charters as public (not private) schools.
- Host a press conference with testimonials at a charter school early in the campaign, so negatives can be rebutted and the issue becomes "old news."
- Respond immediately if attacked. Prepare a response piece to mail that reframes the hostile message as an attack against charter families in the district.
- Encourage state charter organizations to involve charter school families in political activities. This infrastructure must be in place *prior* to the next election cycle, with extra effort committed to traditionally nonvoting neighborhoods.
- Recruit friendly policymakers to run for higher office. Offer volunteers and early financial assistance.
- Create a national and state charter school political action committee (PAC) to raise funds and target candidates to support or oppose at the federal and state levels.

Public school choice originally caught fire from the grass roots. An advocacy infrastructure is essential to capture the power of the grass roots and elect friends of charters and public school choice. The future of chartering depends on it.

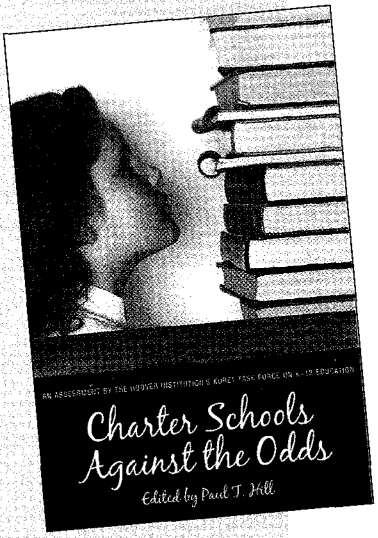
Former state senator Ember Reichgott Junge is president of Ember Communications, Inc. (www.embercommunications.com) and an attorney, writer, and broadcast political analyst.

Education Next Books

An Assessment by Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education

CHARTER SCHOOLS AGAINST THE ODDS

EDITED BY PAUL HILL


An Assessment by the Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education
Charter Schools Against the Odds
Edited by Paul T. Hill

The uphill battle faced by charter schools–and how they can overcome the odds.

Charter schools—born into a hostile environment—are publicly funded schools operated by independent groups under contract with government agencies that provide a valuable alternative to traditional, bureaucratically operated school districts. But state laws and policies have stacked the deck against them by limiting the number of charter schools allowed in a state, forbidding for-profit firms from holding charters, forcing them to pay rent out of operating funds, and many other ways. *Charter Schools against the Odds* explains how these policies can be amended to level the playing field and give charter schools—and the children they serve—a fairer chance to succeed.

Paul T. Hill is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education. He is also a research professor in the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs and director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, both at the University of Washington.

October 2006 215 pages
ISBN: 978-0-8179-4761-3 $25.00 Cloth
ISBN: 978-0-8179-4762-0 $15.00 Paper

COURTING FAILURE

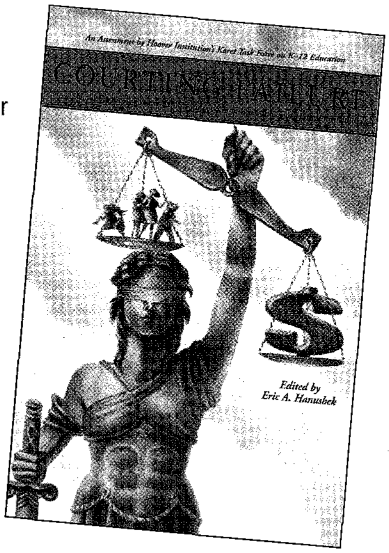
How School Finance Lawsuits Exploit Judges' Good Intentions and Harm Our Children

EDITED BY ERIC A. HANUSHEK

Lawsuits over the adequacy of school financing have appeared in a majority of states, but no evidence about their potential impact on students has been available. *Courting Failure* assesses recent court actions in school adequacy lawsuits and their impact on student outcomes and shows that judicial actions regarding school finance have in fact not had a beneficial effect on student performance.

Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences.

October 2006 367 pages
ISBN 978-0-8179-4781-1 $25.00 Cloth
ISBN 978-0-8179-4782-8 $15.00 Paper

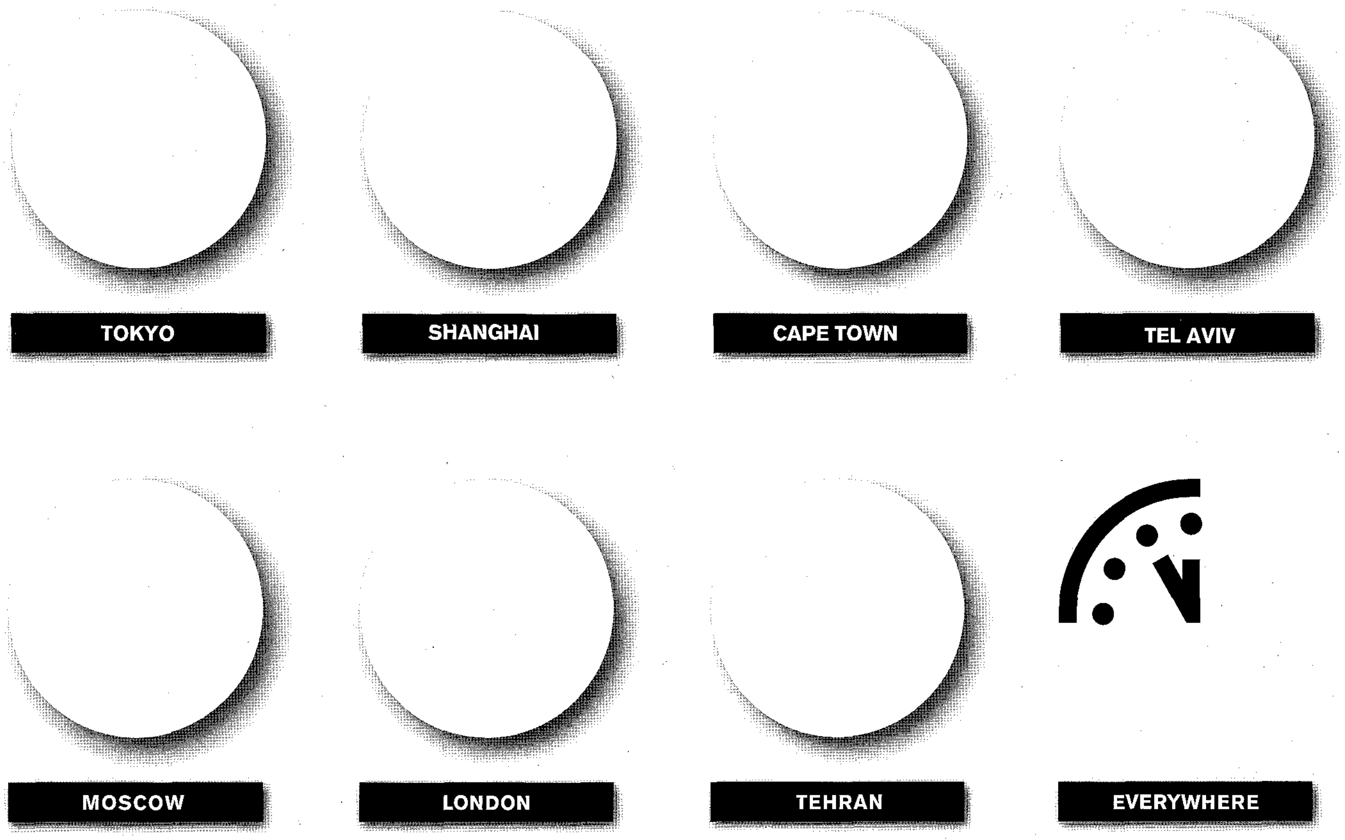

An Assessment by Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education
COURTING FAILURE
$
Edited by Eric A. Hanushek

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

HOOVER INSTITUTION

. . . ideas defining a free society

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Stanford California 94305-6010 Toll-free: 877.466.8374 Fax: 650.723.1687 info@hoover.stanford.edu www.hoover.org



Founded by Manhattan Project scientists in 1945, the Chicago-based Bulletin informs the public about threats to humanity from nuclear weapons, climate change, and emerging technologies in the life sciences. The Bulletin moved forward the minute hand of its Doomsday Clock in January 2007.

Learn more. Subscribe today.

IT IS 5 MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

thebulletin.org

EDUCATION next
A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH
309 CGIS South
1730 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02138-3001
Tel. (617) 495-2491, Fax (617) 496-1507
Website www.educationnext.org

Nonprofit
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 26
Peterborough, NH
03458

To subscribe or to submit change of address information, call us at 1-800-935-2882; visit us at www.educationnext.org; fax us at (650) 723-8626; email us at educationnext@hoover.stanford.edu; or write to *Education Next* Subscriptions, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6010

**************************AUTO**5-DIGIT 94301
1173751 XXXX 1 184
80
Ron Unz
555 Bryant St No 371
Palo Alto CA 94301-1704